

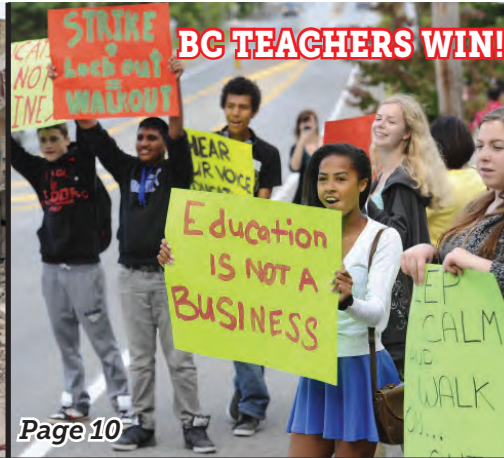
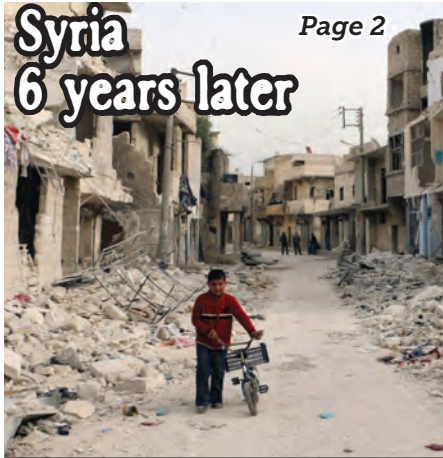


"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che

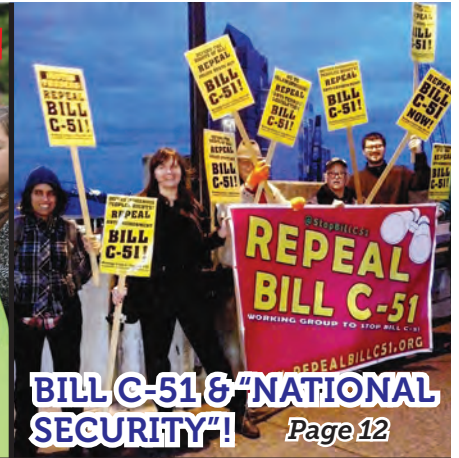
Fire This Time!

Syria
6 years later

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SYRIA



By Nita Palmer

ISRAEL: CARRYING OUT THE US AGENDA IN SYRIA

The seventh year of war in Syria began with an unprovoked attack by Israel against a Syrian military outpost near Palmyra on March 17. Israel carried out three more rounds of air strikes near Damascus two days later. The Israeli Air Force claimed, as they have previously, to be targeting Hezbollah supply convoys. This is not the first time that Israel has attacked targets in Syria since the war there began; however, the four attacks in succession are a marked escalation from previous operations. The Syrian government condemned the attacks as a violation of their sovereignty and have said they will retaliate if Israel continues its aggression.

In recent months, the Syrian Army has begun to liberate parts of the country held by ISIS and al-Nusra front terrorists, despite being obstructed at every turn by the US and coalition forces. The US-led coalition in Syria has refused to work with the Syrian government against ISIS and continues to support terrorist organizations which are tearing the country apart. It seems this latest offensive is an attempt by Israel to tip the balance of forces in favour of the so-called 'rebel' terrorists, or perhaps to stoke the fires of war by forcing the Syrian government into a conflict which would give Israel and

SIX YEARS OF IMPERIALIST WAR IN SYRIA: WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

the US renewed justification for direct military intervention in Syria. Although the Israeli government has maintained an official position of neutrality on the war in Syria, their actions have been anything but: from conducting air strikes to providing medical aid to injured al-Qaeda and al-Nusra Front fighters, Israel has confirmed its place as stalwart US ally.

SIX YEARS OF 'CIVIL' WAR – THE DESTRUCTION OF A COUNTRY

Six years on, the mainstream media still call the war in Syria a 'civil war' and claim that it began with peaceful protests. However, from the very beginning this situation could never truly be called a civil war. The fighting broke out not from peaceful protests, but from a sudden armed uprising by anti-government rebels. We now know that these 'rebels' were and are trained, armed, and funded by the US government as well as allies including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. The Pentagon ran a \$500 million program to support these 'rebels'; although that program has since been cancelled, other covert programs continue. The Canadian government has sent \$5.3 million to these groups, while the Saudis supply both weapons and funds. With so

many foreign governments supporting the anti-government forces from the very beginning, this truly cannot be called a civil war.

It soon became clear that these 'moderate rebels' were not very moderate at all. More than 10,000 fighters from the so-called Free Syrian Army joined ISIS; thousands more became members of one of the many radical Islamist groups fighting the Syrian government. Countless civilians have reported torture, rape, mutilation and summary executions by these 'moderate rebels'.

The Syrian Army has begun to make strides forward against these terrorists, and the Syrian government is now in control of most of the country's major cities. However, much of the country's rural area and smaller cities remain in the hands of ISIS or other terrorist groups. This cradle of human civilization has been torn apart by foreign-backed terrorists. Beautiful buildings both ancient and modern lie in ruin; vital infrastructure has been destroyed, along with many of Syria's principal industries: agriculture, oil, tourism, and the service sector.

LIFE IN SYRIA: THEN AND NOW

The war has thrown this once-modern country back decades in development and living standards. Speaking to Australia's ABC News in September, Syrian refugee Nada Hassoun tried to explain what life was like in Syria before the war.

"Before war we had everything you can imagine, we had a modern life... we were a bit behind maybe USA or Australia, but we were going through a good thing. We had shopping malls, good facilities, big swimming pools, all kinds of universities and that was our life. I'm not saying we didn't have black points in our life; everywhere you have good sides and bad sides to life but we were living safely, we were planning for the future."

The war has decimated Syria's economy, with the Syrian pound losing 90% of its value since 2011. The skyrocketing inflation has put food, fuel, housing, and many other basic necessities out of reach of many Syrians. Many commodities - even basic food staples such as meat and fresh vegetables - are now only available on the black market. In an interview with Reuters, former assistant to the Minister of Economy Hayan Suleiman explained the impact that the war has had on the economy and food supply: "Prices are high and increasing every day, but what can we do? Raqqa, Hasake, Daraa, Idlib and the coastal area were the center of crop production. The first

four provinces are out of control."

Syria's electrical infrastructure has also been dealt a major blow, with generating capacity dropping from 8500 megawatts before the war to just 1400 today. This supplies just a quarter of the country's electricity needs, according to electricity minister Zuheir Kharbutli. Areas which once had round-the-clock power now have it for just two hours at a time, with outages lasting 15 hours or more. This has greatly impacted not only families but vital institutions such as hospitals and schools.

The Syrian health care system - once one of the best in the region - has been devastated as well. On the anniversary of the war, the World Health Organization issued a statement highlighting the deterioration of health care in Syria since the war began, noting that, "more than half of public hospitals and primary health centres in the Syrian Arab Republic have either closed or are only partially functioning. Almost two-thirds of health care workers have fled. Many health care facilities that are open lack clean water, electricity, and sufficient medical and surgical supplies." Much of Syria's once-booming pharmaceutical industry, which supplied the majority of the country's medicines, has also been destroyed.

Education has also been put on hold for this generation of Syria's children and youth. Before the war, there were more than

22,000 schools operating across the country according to the United Nation's 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Today, 7,400 schools have been closed, and those which remain open generally lack running water and adequate sanitation. In addition, millions of children are unable to attend school due to security concerns.

The International Rescue Committee released a report earlier this month which found that more than half of seventh-graders could not read at a second-grade level, and 46% of eighth-graders could not complete a second-grade math problem.

"This is quite alarming," said Paul Frisoli, [International Rescue Committee's] senior technical adviser for education. "In a country that really promoted the value of education we are now seeing severely low levels of literacy and numeracy, which can have a severe impact on children's learning going forward." He noted that before the war, Syria was known to have a "95 percent-plus literacy rate".

The nearly five million Syrians who have fled their country face a dire situation as well: risking their lives in a perilous journey to Europe, or holed up in squalid, overpopulated refugee camps, often without work, access to health care, or education for their children.

Khalid Ibn al-Walid Mosque in Homs, Syria





Some of the millions of Syrians forced to leave their homes as refugees

CALL FOR 'REGIME CHANGE' IS A CALL FOR MORE BLOODSHED

Amid this dire situation, the US and their allies continue to push for 'regime change' in Syria, insisting that the removal of President Bashar al-Assad will bring 'peace' and 'human rights' to the country. But what is their solution - to hand the country over to the control of their so-called 'moderates' who have been torturing and beheading anyone whose politics or religious beliefs they disagree with? All that 'regime change' in Syria will accomplish is strengthening terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS - the very terrorists that the US claims to be fighting! However, it is clear by now that for the US and their allies, the goal of overthrowing the independent Syrian government is more important than stopping global terrorism.

US Congresswoman and Iraq war veteran Tulsi Gabbard recently published a letter from Tima Kurdi, a Syrian woman who now resides in Canada. Kurdi is the aunt of Alan Kurdi, the little boy whose image became famous around the world when his body was found washed up on a Greek

beach, having drowned in his family's attempt to flee the war in Syria.

Tima Kurdi writes:

"I do not support one side or the other in the Syrian conflict. But I'm very frustrated by the Western media's one-sided coverage of this war. The US, the West, and the Gulf countries are funding rebels associated with al-Qaeda and ISIS, giving them weapons to

empower them to keep fighting and destroy and divide Syria. I know first-hand. I've been trying to tell the world about what is happening in Syria, but the media doesn't want people to hear the truth.

If the West keeps funding the rebels, we will see more people flee, more bloodshed, and

Children move amongst the rubble in Kobani, Syria



more suffering. My people have suffered for at least six years. This is not about supporting Bashar [al-Assad]. This is about ending the war in Syria.

We can't continue like this, supporting regime change. We have seen it before in Iraq, in Libya, and look what happened to them. They feel there is no end at sight."

WHAT IS THE US INTEREST IN SYRIA?

The campaign for 'regime change' and other reasons for intervention such as fighting ISIS are all justifications to cover for the real goal of the US: to destroy one of the last remaining independent governments in the region and turn Syria back into a semi-colonial country.

Since the 'war on terror' began, this has been the campaign of the US and their allies: to turn every independent country back to a land over which they can exert control. This new era of war and occupation has spanned the globe, from Asia and Latin America to Africa and the Middle East. In a time when the US is facing growing economic competition from rising powers such as Russia and China, they are racing to make sure they maintain the economic, political and military upper hand in the world. These bloody wars also serve to crush the resistance of independent countries like Syria, which have proven that it is possible for a country to succeed without selling itself to US interests.



END THE WAR IN SYRIA!

It is the people of Syria who are paying the ultimate price in this global chess game - and ultimately, people in the US, Canada, and other imperialist countries too, as we see more and more taxpayer money funnelled from social services into military spending or 'aid' for terrorist groups.

How dare the US government or the Canadian government claim that they are defending human rights in Syria, when almost half a million Syrians have died in this war and by every measure possible quality of life has deteriorated? How dare they claim to be standing up for our interests

or protecting us from terrorism when it is they who are funding and training the terrorists?

We cannot be silent any longer. It is time for everyone who believes in peace, justice, truth, and humanity to raise our voices together to demand an end to this war, and an end to foreign intervention and interference in Syria. This is no more nor less than our duty to Syrians and to humanity.

US AND ALL IMPERIALISTS OUT OF SYRIA!
HANDS OFF SYRIA!

Follow Nita on Twitter: @NGP1z0

U.S. airstrike in Kobani, Syria



IN DEFENSE OF YEMEN

HOW SAUDI ARABIA, ITS COALITION & THE U.S. ARE IMPOSING WAR, DESTRUCTION & FAMINE



By Azza Rofbi

“Since we lost our jobs, we have no income and we have nothing to eat...either we die from the bombing or from the hunger.” Fatima told the Guardian Newspaper. She lives in a small village in the Al Hudaydah Governorate, Yemen and struggles to take care and feed her two grandsons.

Fatima’s family tragedy is far too common in Yemen today as the impoverished country continue to be the subject of a brutal, devastating and ongoing bombing campaign led by Saudi Arabia and backed by the United States. The Saudi-led coalition includes United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan.

Saudi Arabia started carrying out this bombing campaign in Yemen on March 26, 2015, under the pretext of bringing stability back to the country and to reinstate Yemen’s president Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Mansour Hadi lost all legitimacy when his presidential term expired and

later he resigned from presidency and fled to his masters in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi claims of wanting to bring peace and tranquility to the Yemeni people have been a complete sham! As we mark two years of this cruel and inhuman Saudi-led bombing campaign, Yemen faces one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time.

Under Saudi bombing, Yemen on the verge of famine

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is dire and getting worst by the day. Yemen’s Legal Center of Rights and Development estimates that 12,296 people were killed in the war and over 20,000 others wounded. The center also reported that the Saudi airstrikes have destroyed 763 schools and institutes, 270 health care facilities, 5,596 commercial facilities and 1,577 bridges and roads.

As the economic infrastructure of the country is destroyed daily by Saudi bombing, Yemen’s only lifeline is the limited imports and humanitarian aid

that flows sporadically into the country. The land, sea and aerial blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia has resulted in shortages of food, water, fuel, medicines and the skyrocketing of prices.

The indiscriminate bombing campaign coupled with the economic blockade against Yemen and the lack of adequate health care facilities, has put the country on the brink of humanitarian disaster and starvation. A new report released by the United Nations (UN), indicates that 17 million people in the country are facing severe food insecurity, meaning that they are on the verge of famine. The rate of child malnutrition is one of the highest in the world with over 3 million women and children under 5 in urgent need of humanitarian support to prevent or cure malnutrition.

With utmost disregard for human life, the Saudi-led coalition had obstructed the import of vital food, medicine and fuel supply to Yemen. According to the charity group Save the Children based in UK, “In just two months, the Saudi-led coalition has prevented three shipments of medical aid from arriving at the port of Hodeida. The cargo, intended to reach 300,000 people, included essential supplies such as antibiotics, surgical equipment, medicine and equipment to support malnourished children... The delays have prevented 51 healthcare facilities in the region that Save the Children supports from operating fully.”

Nightmare at land and sea

An estimate of 500,000 Somali refugees have been living in Yemen for years integrated into local communities. As the Saudi bombing campaign in Yemen displaced millions of people, Somali refugees are once again forced to flee for their lives and catch the first boat heading to the Horn of Africa. On the late hours of March 16, 2017, a boat crammed with 150 Somali refugees sailed out of the port of Al Hudaydah on their way to Sudan. The journey was abruptly cut when their boat came under attack by rockets and gunfire.

“We heard the sound of the Apache (helicopter) coming toward us. It was maybe 40 or 50 meters above us,” said 20-year-old survivor Ibrahim Hussein. “The gunfire did not come from one direction. It fanned back and forth. Each time, it hit many people...People were shot in their abdomen, head, feet.”

A total of 43 people were killed and 30 injured because of this brutal attack. Saudi Arabia continues to deny that they are responsible of this war crime but



testimonies from survivors all point to the attack coming from a warship and an Apache helicopter, which is only used by the Saudi coalition in the war on Yemen. "The coalition's apparent firing on a boat filled with fleeing refugees is only the latest likely war crime in Yemen's two-year-long war," said Sarah Leah Whitson, the Middle East director at the Human Rights Watch.

US accomplice in Saudi crimes

From day one of the Saudi bombing campaign against Yemen, the US government has offered its political, military and financial support for the mission. In a statement the Obama White House declared that "While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support."

Saudi Arabia would've not adventured in such a brutal bombing campaign if it didn't have the full backing of its imperialist masters like the US and UK. Saudi fighter jets wouldn't be able to reach their targets in Yemen if it wasn't for the US air force help with refueling them midair. The US and UK are also restocking the Saudi weapons. According to Amnesty International both countries have sold \$5 billion worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the war in March 2015.

The new Trump administration has continued and increased US support to Saudi Arabia. They have recently approved the resumption of sales of precision-guided

munitions to Saudi Arabia worth about \$390 million. Trump is also expanding the U.S. drone operations in Yemen with the pretext of fighting against Al-Qaeda. According to The New York Times "So far this month, the United States has also launched more than 49 strikes across Yemen... That is more strikes than the United States had carried out during any other full year on record."

The US government can claim that they are not pulling the trigger but they are providing Saudi Arabia with the gun, the ammunitions and the alibi to avoid prosecution. They are accomplice of all Saudi's war crimes against the people of Yemen. The excuse of fighting terrorism and wanting to restore peace and stability to Yemen is a farce! Since the beginning of the bombing campaign, the country has only seen death and destruction.

Saudi Arabia and the US have only in mind their own strategic and regional interests. Their goal is to regain their grip over Yemen and further expand their hegemony over North Africa and the Middle East. A strong and independent Yemen is a big obstacle against their influence and hegemony in the region.

Two years of steadfastness and resistance

All Saudi Arabia crimes against Yemen have failed to destroy the pride and bravery of the Yemeni people. On March 26, 2017, hundreds of thousands of people defied Saudi fighter jets and took to the streets of the capital Sana'a in a massive demonstration protesting two years of the Saudi led aggression on their country.

In addition to their resilience on the ground, Yemenis are also waging an online and social media campaign trying to break the media blackout of the Saudi-led bombing campaign on their beloved country. They are sharing their stories and voices to counter all the US and Saudi lies and deceptions.

As 18-year-old Yemeni girl, Fatima Noman, published in her online blog The Ambiguous Odyssey, "We are going to teach you strength, perseverance, and courage. We will rise again. This is Yemen, we will not kneel down to any country."

Let's join Fatima and millions of Yemeni people in their fighting for their right to life, freedom, sovereignty and self-determination.

US/Saudi Arabia Hands off Yemen!

Stop Bombing Yemen!

Lift the Naval, Aerial and Land Blockade on Yemen!

Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:
@Azza_R14

Massive protest in Sana'a, Yemen marking two years of Saudi bombing. March 26, 2017.



VANCOUVER & THE WORLD STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH YEMEN!

#Together4Yemen
#EndYemenSiege
#VigilforYemen



By Azza Rojbi

March 25, 2017, marked two years since the beginning of the US-backed Saudi-led bombing campaign against Yemen. The brutal, devastating and ongoing war against the people of Yemen claimed more than 10,000 lives and destroyed schools, hospitals, houses, mosques, markets and other infrastructure.

Despite all this death and destruction, the Yemeni people continue to show their strength and resistance to the Saudi-led military aggression on their country. On March 26 2017, hundreds of thousands of people rallied in Yemen's capital of Sana'a braving the Saudi fighter jets for a massive demonstration condemning two years of Saudi led bombing on their country. Along with the huge mass rally in Yemen, 15 other actions took place in major cities around the world as part of an International Day of Action for Yemen.

This Global Day of Action resulted from relationships built through the International Conference in Support

of the Yemeni People that took place in London, England in August 2016. The conference brought together hundreds of antiwar and human rights activists, journalists, lawyers, academics, politicians and community leaders from over 20 countries including representatives from Vancouver's antiwar coalition Mobilization

Against War and Occupation (MAWO). The conference was a great opportunity to establish global connections between groups and individuals organizing against the war on Yemen and have helped to make organizing against the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen more united and effective.



Vancouver, Canada



It is with this spirit of unity, that people in Sana'a, London, New York, Vancouver, Rome, Algiers, Paris, Geneva and several other cities around the world took to the streets to condemn two year of this cruel war against the people of Yemen by Saudi Arabia and their allies. Along with the actions on the ground, people from around the world participated in a social media and twitter campaign

sharing videos and photos exposing the crimes of the Saudi led coalition and showing the resistance of the Yemeni people.

In Vancouver, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), and the Yemeni community activists organized a vigil for Yemen. In front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, antiwar activists, members of the Yemeni community and peace-loving people

Vancouver, Canada



came together in support of Yemen waving Yemeni flags and holding signs and banners condemning the atrocities of the Saudi crimes against the people of Yemen. Participants also held candles in honor of the people that lost their lives as consequence of the war on Yemen.

Inspiring photos from the heroic opposition of the Yemeni people to the Saudi aggression to their country, and photos from actions around the world in support of Yemen that took place earlier in the day, were projected on a big screen set up on the stairs of the Vancouver Art Gallery. People passing by stopped to see these images which are not reflected by the mainstream media. An outreach tent was also setup for passersby to get more information and learn about the situation in Yemen and the destruction and atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia and their military coalition.

Azza Rojbi, MAWO Executive Committee member, welcomed participants to the vigil and spoke about the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen caused by the Saudi led military aggression on the country. She also invited people to sign MAWO's petition calling on the Canadian government to cancel its \$15 billion arms deal to supply Saudi Arabia with armored military vehicles.

She was followed by a speech from Asaad Aljaboubi, leading Yemeni community organizer with MAWO. Asaad presented a report on the degree of killing and destruction caused by the Saudi-led coalition bombing campaign and the extent of

London, UK



Paris, France



Sana'a, Yemen



damages especially to the health care sector caused by the air, land and sea blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia on Yemen. He demanded an immediate lift of the blockade on Yemen and an end to the war on the Yemeni people.

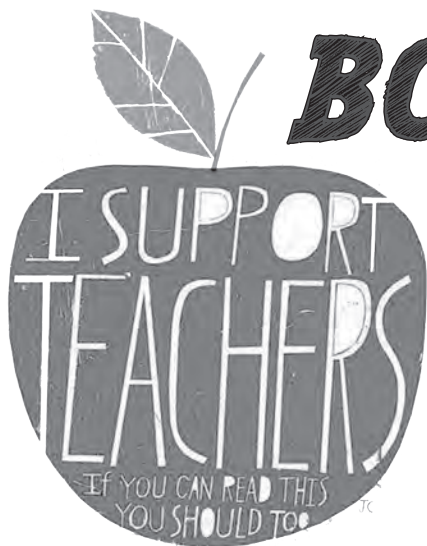
Participants also heard from another member of the Yemeni community in Vancouver, Khaled Al-Sarraj who highlighted the civilian casualties caused by the war on Yemen and the lack of

access to food, medicine and basic necessities. Then, Thomas Davies, spoke on behalf of Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice and condemned the role of the US and their imperialist allies in backing and supporting Saudi Arabia's crimes against the people of Yemen. He called on people to stand together in support of the people of Yemen in their fight for justice and self-determination.

To close off this important action for Yemen, people heard a recorded voice message from Kim Sharif, prominent lawyer and the director of Human Rights for Yemen, also one of the main organizers of the protest for Yemen in London, England. Kim gave a solidarity greeting and thanked MAWO and all participants for their continuous support to the people of Yemen.

As the vigil wrapped up participants chanted energetically "Hands Off Yemen" "End the War Now" "End the Siege Now" and vowed to continue supporting the Yemeni people in their fight for their right to life, freedom, sovereignty and self-determination.

*Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:
@Azza_R14*



BC Teachers Win!

Canada-wide Challenges Continue



By Tamara Hansen*

In November 2016, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) won their case against the BC government at the Supreme Court of Canada. The victory for teachers culminates a fiery battle, which began in 2002, 14 years ago during my final year as a high school student, and lasted to 2016, my sixth year as a teaching professional and BCTF member. Over the last 14 years teachers, along with students, parents and community members, fought to restore contract language regarding class size and composition guarantees and the right to negotiate, which were stripped away by BC Liberal government legislation. The victory at the Supreme Court vindicates teachers who, continue to assert their right to better working conditions, and better classroom conditions for their students.

Since coming to power in 2001, the BC Liberal government has torn up teacher contracts; eliminated class size and composition language; taken the freeze off of university and college tuition; increased funding for private schools; cut funding for public schools; created dangerous bureaucratic barriers for seismic upgrades; and the list goes on. Despite the difficulties, one thing has been clear: the BC government is not fumbling or making innocent mistakes; their cuts and undermining of public education were about political priorities and interests.

Of course, many of the government's own decisions have so infuriated people living in British Columbia that the government has had to change their policies or plans – due to protests or upcoming elections. However, with the November 2016 victory their hand has been forced by Canada's highest court, the Supreme Court of Canada.

A quick timeline of the court actions

January 2002 - The BC Liberal government legislates a three-year "deal" that strips teachers' contracts of class size and composition guarantees. The "deal" also banned teachers from re-negotiating those issues in future contract talks. That same year, the BCTF took the BC government to court.

November 2010 - The BCTF is at the BC Supreme Court continuing to argue against the 2002 legislation outlined above.

April 2011 - The BC Supreme Court rules in the BCTF's favour. The court agrees that BC teachers have the right to negotiate class size and composition and that the government legislation that stripped teachers of that right is unconstitutional.

April 2012 - The BC government goes back to the drawing board constructing "Bill 22". Despite making only minor and insignificant changes to the 2002 legislation (the unconstitutional legislation), "Bill 22" is passed into law by the BC Liberal government.

January 2014 - The BCTF takes the government to court over "Bill 22". BC Supreme Court Justice Susan Griffin is appalled at the government's attempt to subvert the April 2011 court decision by passing virtually identical legislation and rules that their "Bill 22" is also unconstitutional. The BC government realizes it cannot continue down this path and decides to bring its case to the B.C. Court of Appeal.

April 2015 - The BC government wins their case at the BC Court of Appeal. The court overturns the 2014 Griffin decision.

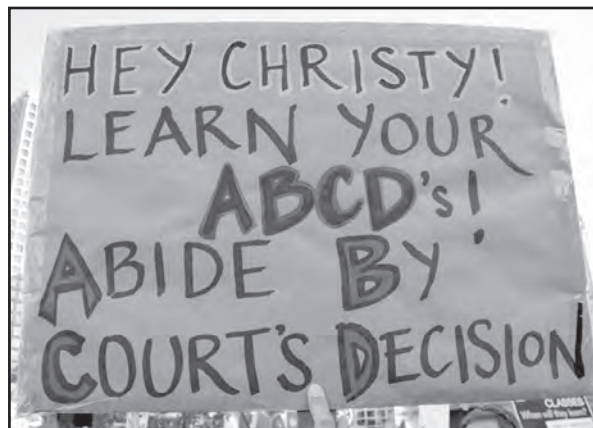
November 2016 - The BCTF appeals to the highest court in Canada, the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of Canada rules swiftly in favour of BC teachers reinstating

the 2014 Griffin decision. VICTORY for teachers and for public education in British Columbia!

Why teachers fight for Public Education

Contrary to what the mainstream media often shows, teachers and the BC Teachers' Federation are not hotheaded or irrational. Indeed, teachers are extremely patient. We have kept working through torn-up contracts, deepening cuts and even court rulings that found that the laws passed by the BC government violated our rights. We have been pushing, testing, organizing, taking limited job action and occasionally going on strike throughout the years for a fair contract and suitable classroom conditions for our students and ourselves.

A big part of improving classroom conditions



Teachers Protest in Vancouver, BC – September, 2014

is reinstating the class size and composition guarantees that were done away with by the BC government, and are now being re-established after our victory at the Supreme Court. Class size means the ratio of students to teacher, which for high schools is generally 30 students per teacher. Class composition means the ratio of students with learning challenges per teacher and class. Students with various learning requirements need more teacher attention. This becomes near

impossible to manage when a teacher has 30 students in a class and 5 or 6 of them also need supplementary teaching considerations, tools, space, time, etc. These two issues have a major impact on students' quality of learning and our ability to teach effectively.

Many thought it was a waste of money to try to hold the BC government and Premier Christy Clark accountable, however others recognized that the government would continue to strip BC public schools to the bones if we gave up the fight. As teachers, we took on the heavy responsibility to inform the public about what was going on inside BC schools. BC Teachers kept up the fight year after year to get our public education system back on track, despite being labelled as 'mean-spirited' or 'out of touch with reality' and other smears by the government and media.

Upcoming Provincial Election & Education

On March 24, 2017, CBC journalist Richard Zussman wrote, "The B.C. government is meeting the Supreme Court of Canada order to restore class size and composition to 2002 levels by allocating \$330 million in funding. School districts are now set to hire 2,600 new teachers with the additional money." Once more, it is important to emphasize the BC Liberals are only re-establishing the moneys and jobs taken away since 2002, this is not new spending. Furthermore, this money is not about them changing their priorities, it is what they have been forced to do by the Supreme Court of Canada.

On March 11, 2017, Province Newspaper journalist Mike Smyth asked his readers, "Will voters forgive and forget Christy Clark's war with teachers?" This article is clearly alluding to the upcoming May 9, 2017 provincial election, when the BC Liberals are hoping to be re-elected. The current provincial legislature has 47 seats held by Liberal MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly), 35 seats held by the New Democratic Party and 3 independent MLAs, which means the ruling party (made up of federal Conservative and Liberal party members) holds a very comfortable majority. Since 2001, the BC Liberals have led four consecutive majority governments; unfortunately, it seems unlikely they will be unseated in the upcoming election.

As of March 30, 2017, neither the BC NDP nor the BC Green Party have their full party platform available on their websites. While they do outline some policy points,

neither has published their specific promises regarding public education. How can voters, who wish to prioritize public education, have confidence in either of these so-called alternatives? Are voters just supposed to have faith they will prioritize education? In reality, it will be up to teachers and their communities to continue taking action in defence of public education. Whichever party takes office after the BC elections must restore public education to where it was in



Teachers Protest in Toronto, Ontario - August, 2012

2002, but also push ahead for new gains and improvements. It is important to remember our victory is that we have restored contract language that existed 15 years ago, we still have new battles and gains to be made ahead.

The Struggle for Better Public Education Continues

The Supreme Court victory for BC teachers resounded across Canada. The province of

government of Nova Scotia has continued on its offensive against public education. In February 2017, they passed Bill 75, limiting teachers' rights to fair collective bargaining. In an NSTU press release on March 10, 2017, the president Liette Doucet explains, "Teachers across Nova Scotia have been taking a stand for better education, and the government's response has been to legislate away their collective rights and impose a contract. [...] It's unfortunate that Minister Casey hasn't been willing to make needed reforms to improve classroom conditions for teachers and students." The NSTU is also working towards taking the NS government to court over its legislation.

It is not only BC teachers who have successfully challenged anti-public education legislation in court. On April 21, 2017 an Ontario Superior Court Judge, Thomas Lederer, declared that the Ontario provincial government had "substantially interfered with meaningful collective bargaining" in passing anti-teacher legislation, "Bill 115" in 2012. A Canadian Press article explained that the Bill "imposed contracts on teachers that froze some of their wages and limited their ability to strike, so five unions took the government to court." The judge's decision to side with teachers is another indication that governments across Canada who are planning to ignore the victory of BC teachers at the Supreme Court may find their wrists getting slapped in the lower courts as well.



High School Students Protest, Nova Scotia - December, 2016

Nova Scotia is engaged in a similar battle. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) has been fighting their provincial government for class-size caps, restrictions on the number of students with "individual program plans" per classroom, and less administrative workload. Unfortunately, because the Supreme Court decision in favor of the BCTF did not actually change any laws in Canada, the

Because of these growing trends across Canada, BC teachers understand the BC government's war on public education is not over. For example, the imposition of new province-wide curriculum is under serious fire because there has been little money set aside for teacher training and implementation. If the BC Liberals are re-elected in May with a new four-year mandate, the assault and attack on teachers and public education could very well begin again. What teachers and our supporters have learned through years of struggle is that we must keep our guard up and continue fighting reactionary anti-public education legislation. We must keep in mind that our daily challenges are not personal difficulties; they are social problems that require social and political solutions.

**Tamara Hansen is a high school teacher in British Columbia*

*Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
@THans01*

You have to be making some particularly extreme civil liberties violations when even the Conservative Party thinks you're going too far. That's just what's happening with the Liberal government's proposed National Security parliamentary oversight committee. Promoted as a way to make sure the police, secret police and government agencies don't abuse the massive new powers and secrecy they were handed under the so-called "Anti-Terrorism" law Bill C-51, the committee is a dead duck that

Pattern Emerges.

Why is this so significant? Because a key Liberal election promise was to resolve the "problematic elements" of Bill C-51 – which gave the police, secret police and government agencies incredible new powers of surveillance,

enacted as part of Bill C-51, which were never justified, present an even more serious

BILL C-51 AND "NATIONAL SECURITY" IS TRUDEAU REALLY ANY DIFFERENT FROM HARPER?

n o b o d y
besides the Liberals
can stomach.

Extraordinarily, the committee will be appointed by the Prime Minister, and all of the information it sends and receives must be approved by his office first. The Liberals have even rejected amendments that would have given it routine powers to subpoena witnesses and information, stay on top of ongoing police investigations, and to make it more difficult for ministers to refuse to turn over information.

All of this left even Conservative public safety critic Tony Celement to grumble, "If you're going to go through the trouble of creating the committee, you should allow it to do its job properly."

A

"disruption" and detention. It also uses language related to "support" for terrorism which is so vague legal experts say it could be used to target basically anybody.

The Liberals have been in power for a year and half, and have changed nothing of Bill C-51. The most concrete thing they've done is create this toothless committee.

As the BC Civil Liberties Association recently reiterated, "No committee and no oversight bodies (however constituted) can make amends for, or provide meaningful accountability in the face of, dangerous and recklessly overbroad powers granted to agencies working within national security.

The measures

danger to the rights and security of Canadians in light of the now-anticipated reshaping of US national security policy."

The icing on the cake was the Liberals refusal to make even basic changes to give the committee a semblance of being able to do its job, and then cutting debate. For a government that ran on an election slogan of "Real Change Now" - it definitely looks like we are getting more of the same Harper-era style government, and in some cases arguably worse.

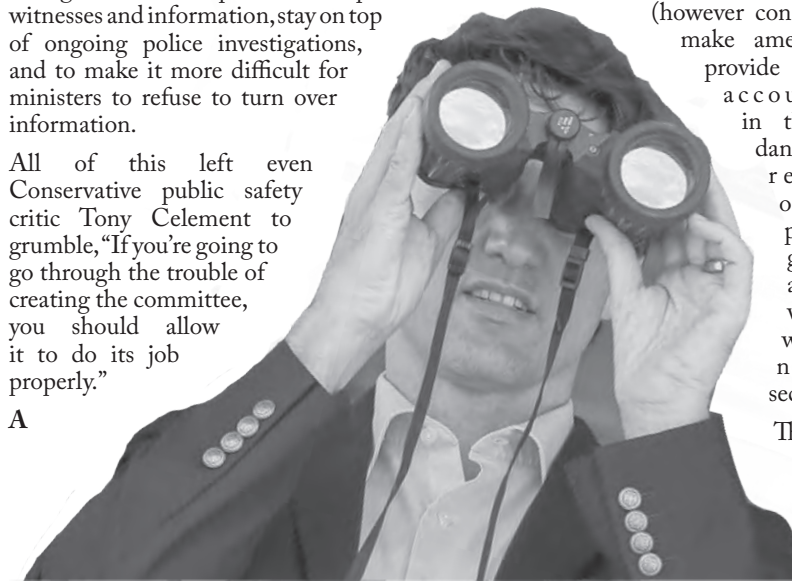
Priorities

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale recently said he is "hopeful" he will submit legislation regarding changes to Bill C-51 during the spring but, "I just don't know yet — whether we'll be able to get it all done at once. Or whether it will take maybe two or three pieces of legislation to get it done."

So everything is following the familiar pattern of big positive sounding announcements that are actually meaningless when you take a closer look at language like "hopeful" and "I just don't know yet..."

In contrast, they have wasted no time introducing legislation allowing US border guards on Canadian soil increased power to detain and search people. In an incredible doublespeak, Trudeau defended this by saying, "Canadian laws are in place, so there is extra protection when Canadians go through American customs in Canada."

This is at a time when Girls Guides



Vancouver action - National Day of Action for Press Freedom and against Bill C51
February 25, 2017



Canada, the Toronto School District, and many others have new policies against trips across the US border citing major safety concerns. Since the election of Donald Trump, even legally crossing into the US has become increasingly risky and more and more people are reporting being detained, interrogated, harassed and turned away without reason. In February alone, agents searched more than 5,000 mobile devices, more than in the entire year of 2015, according to Department of Homeland Security data obtained by NBC News.

So in a time when US border agents are becoming increasingly aggressive and creating safety concerns, the Canadian government is trying to give them more legal power to do so!

They've Got it All Wrong

CSIS, Canada's spy agency, which was one of the primary beneficiaries of new undefined powers of "disruption" under Bill C-51, has just released its first public report in two years. It's clear within that they are continuing to use the same Islamophobic rhetoric that the Conservative and now the Liberals are using to justify Bill C-51.

The report stresses that the Canadians are under "constant threat" from Islamic terrorists associated with Daesh and al Qaeda, but offers no real supporting evidence. As Mathew Barrens wrote in a recent article titled, "CSIS's Alternative Face Universe":

"Of the nine attacks listed, six occurred overseas, where Canadians were not directly targeted but tragically died as a result of happenstance. Two attacks in 2014 were already addressed in the previous public report. With nothing to report for all of 2015, that left one remaining 2016 incident in which three soldiers suffered minor stab wounds at a North York military recruiting centre, a crime committed by a man found unfit for trial "due to the ongoing psychotic symptoms of a major mental illness."

Remarkably, the most deadly terrorist attack to occur in Canada in the last decade – January's Quebec City mosque massacre, carried out by a shooter with white nationalist leanings – goes unmentioned...

This Islamophobic hype is part of a conscious campaign to justify the wholesale denial of basic civil liberties and human rights, and it must be stopped.

What's Next

A strong case could be made that the last nail in the Harper Conservative government's coffin was its introduction of Bill C-51. Huge protests swept across Canada, and continued even after the Conservatives made amendments to try and calm public anger. They passed the

law, but lost the subsequent election. As the Guardian newspaper noted at the time, "No legislation in memory has united such a diverse array of prominent opponents as the proposed legislation...The campaign to stop Bill C-51 grew to include virtually



every civil-rights group, law professor, retired judge, author, editorialist and public intellectual in Canada."

Every single Liberal MP, including Justin Trudeau, voted in favour of Bill C-51, but they did so promising the big changes which have not materialized. Across Canada, major organizations like the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression continue to push for a Repeal of Bill C-51. The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 in Vancouver has also reached 107 actions in its ongoing weekly action campaign – and is promising to continue until the law is fully repealed. It's important to keep pushing this campaign, reminding people that this is another broken promise by Justin Trudeau's Liberals, and also of the power the initial campaign against Bill C-51. The potential for a massive movement to repeal Bill C-51 still exists, and defending our human and democratic rights is certainly worth the effort.

REPEAL BILL C-51!

Follow Thoma on Twitter: @thomasdavis59



Activists Continue Fighting Against Bill C-51

As spring arrived and the days began getting longer again, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 marked two years of weekly organizing with its 104th weekly picket and petition drive, and revived its banner drop actions. The campaign for a full Repeal of Bill C-51 continues in full swing as Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government continue to attempt to avoid the issue entirely.

The 104th action was held at the busy intersection of Broadway and Cambie in Vancouver, and even though the Working Group has held actions there many times before, the response continues to be constant and dynamic. This also continues to be the case at New Westminster Station, where two weeks later local university students continued to show a lot of interest in the issue.

The Working Group also made it out to Surrey Central Skytrain Station. Despite a torrential downpour organizers were still able to engage with a lot of new people and gain some much important exposure in the growing and diverse community.

With sunsets happening later and later, the Working Group decided to return to banner drops and the familiar sounds of honking from supportive drivers once again fills the air close to busy overpasses. This campaign will continue to alternate between pickets and banner drops during the spring and summer months.

The Working Group has also created new signs which say, "HONK to Repeal Bill C-51!" and has some new banner ideas as well. As long as the unjust and unnecessary Bill C-51 continues to be a law, we will continue to organize to repeal it.

REPEAL BILL C-51!

**OUR SECURITY LIES IN
DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF
ALL!
NO TO ALL FORMS OF
TERRORISM!**

"To be in solidarity with the world is an essential part of our culture, our politics & our conception as a Nation."

An interview with Venezuelan Consul General Wilfredo Pérez Bianco

By Alison Bodine

At the end of March, 2017, Fire This Time sat down with Wilfredo J. Pérez Bianco, the First Consul General and Head of Mission at the Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver, Canada to discuss the current threats of foreign intervention against Venezuela, and the importance of international solidarity.

Fire This Time: We know that it has been a long time that the U.S. government and especially the reactionary governments in Latin America have been trying to frame-up and isolate the government of President Maduro. They are attempting to isolate the impact that Venezuela's revolutionary process has on the whole of the Latin American masses. Especially now, with the deeper crisis within the pro-U.S., counter-revolutionary bourgeois forces in Venezuela, it seems that the U.S. and OAS, with their puppet Luis Almagro, would like to provoke to break the unity and to polarize the OAS against Venezuela. How do you explain Almagro's push against Venezuela?

Wilfredo Pérez Bianco: First of all, I want to thank you for the

opportunity to be able to address your readers and help them understand the true situation that my country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is experiencing. Also, to thank you for breaking the siege imposed by the international media dictatorship in the world, with its large news agencies and mass media. This media no longer fulfills their social function of reporting, violating the human right we all have to receive truthful and timely information. Instead they defend their own interests with lies, falsehoods, manipulations, half truths and misrepresentations, whose ultimate aim is to contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to foreign intervention, including military intervention, in our country. The media has been solicited and encouraged by the Venezuelan opposition that has not been able to find the political solution they are looking for through dialogue and political participation within Venezuela.

Now, to answer your question:

We have seen with astonishment (even horror) that since Mr. Luis Almagro arrived as Secretary General of the OAS, he has devoted himself to attacking Venezuela and its people. His has been an obsessive aggression, as our Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez said during her intervention at an illegitimate meeting of the Permanent Council convened by the Secretary General on Monday, March 27.

Prior to this meeting, his illicit, unilateral, arbitrary, deviant and biased performance had already motivated the 46th General Assembly of the Organization of

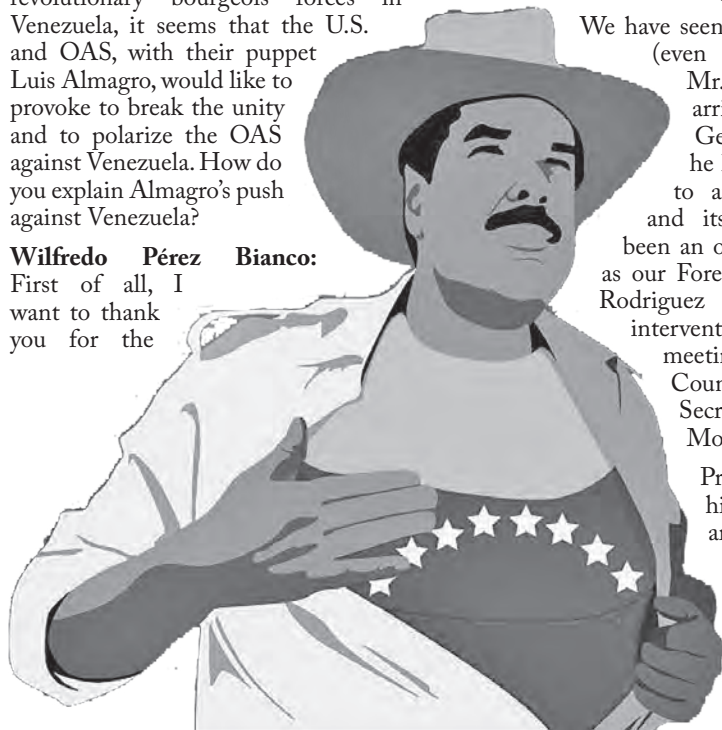


American States, which was held in the Dominican Republic on June 13, 2016, to approve a Resolution that originated from the deep concern of the chancellors of the region about the deviant acts of Mr. Almagro.

As our Chancellor said at that same meeting: Luis Almagro took office on May 26, 2015, and had not yet spent more than 15 days in office when he began his attacks and aggressions against Venezuela. "He arrived with a very clear mandate to this Organization, the first of which was to end the Bolivarian Revolution; and the second, to replace the government of President Maduro and give international support to the violent actions of the Venezuelan ultra right, undermining our sovereignty and the rule of law in Venezuela through destabilization in the country. With the passing of our dear and beloved Commander President Hugo Chávez, leader of the Bolivarian Revolution, he had already intensified the plan to surround Venezuela."

This Non-Conventional War against Venezuela has been a constant aggression by the real international powers, finance and the media, which as we know, are encouraged, supported, coordinated from Washington.

Alison, a very clear example of his stubborn dedication to attack our country, is represented by the fact that since his beginning his Twitter account, he has dedicated almost 21% of his tweets, that is, one in five, to the campaign against Venezuela. 21% of his tweets are dedicated to Venezuela and the rest to the hemispheric agenda. In addition, the Secretary has had twenty-six meetings with the Venezuelan



opposition which could be accounted for between 2016 and 2017; 57% of which have been with militants from *Popular Voluntad*, which is a faction of the most violent ultra right extremists in the country.

Thusly, through his deviant, unlawful, arbitrary and biased actions, Mr. Almagro has violated organizational norms. For example, as per Article 1 of the OAS Charter, the Organization of American States has no capacity or authority to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of Member States, among others.

However, let us remember that the OAS comes from a long and vulgar history of intervention in our continent in favor of US imperialism. As the Chancellor said during her speech: the OAS has been “a diplomatic instrument through which the United States, with its military, commercial, cultural and financial machinery, has imposed not only its model of exploitation but also subjected entire peoples to the most infamous violations of human rights.”

FTT: On March 31, the Supreme Court of Venezuela ruled that it would temporarily assume the role of the legislative branch of government in Venezuela. Two days ago, they reversed this decision. Can you elaborate on this? What are your thoughts on the how the relationship between the revolutionary government of Nicolás Maduro and the bourgeois forces in Venezuela is developing?

Wilfredo Pérez: Yes, as we know the current National Assembly disqualified itself from exercising its functions by consistently disregarding the various judgments of the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) and by committing Constitutional offenses as well various criminal offenses.

But it is also true that the Venezuelan State cannot be paralyzed because the Legislative Branch, in the hands of an opposition party, such as the MUD, has decided to use this space to continuously attack the Constitution. This is why the TSJ, fulfilling its function of safeguarding the constitutional order, has established guidelines for the National Assembly to correct its *persistent legislative omission* (the National Assembly has ceased to make laws), as clearly established in Article 336, paragraph 7 of the Constitution.

That is, the Supreme Court ruled that the continuing contempt of court by the National Assembly has disabled the Legislative power's own ability to exercise its constitutional functions. Thereby, in reference to Article 336.7 of the Constitution, the TSJ declared that there exists today an “unconstitutional parliamentary omission.”



This principle, as laid out in the Constitution, allows the TSJ to establish “correction guidelines” in case of such an omission. In this way, the TSJ is correcting an omission, in-line with the mandates of the Constitution, by empowering the Executive to create joint ventures (while the National Assembly is in contempt of court). Likewise, the TSJ itself will temporarily assume the functions of the National Assembly in order to cover the void while the National Assembly remains in contempt of court.

In this way we can clearly demonstrate that the idea that President Maduro has dissolved the National Assembly, or that he has violated the rule of law, is totally false. It not as the continental right-wing and the national and international media dictatorship has made the world believe. This is even easier to see, as it is not President Maduro who has acted, but the TSJ.

What the TSJ is doing is protecting the country from not having a parliament. It is protecting the country from continuous coup attempts coming from the National Assembly. It is protecting the country from an unconstitutional power that requests foreign intervention before hostile powers. It is protecting the country from the plan of

the national and international right-wing to put in check the people and the institutions of the Republic.

However, after the Attorney General's Office announced its discrepancy with the decisions taken by the Supreme Court, the TSJ revised and partially annulled its rulings, assuring that it will not assume the powers of the National Assembly, and that it will guarantee the immunity of the parliamentarians. Here had arisen a major difference between three of the five public powers of the Republic. Faced with this impasse, President Maduro summoned the National Defense Council, in order to get the TSJ to review their ruling. In practice, this demonstrates that there is a separation of powers in Venezuela, and a participatory, proactive and popular democracy is in full operation. Meanwhile, the National Assembly continues its deviations and remains in contempt of court.

Therefore, the right-wing denunciation of a supposed “coup” or “self-coup” in Venezuela is part of the same discourse and of the same strategy that is working to legitimize foreign intervention in the country.

A coup is what the right-wing tries to commit when it continually defies the decisions of the TSJ, when it promotes

Protest against Luis Almagro. Venezuela, March 28, 2017.



foreign intervention, when it tries to activate unconstitutional mechanisms to overthrow the legitimate government democratically elected by the people, when it attempts to remove the authority from the other public powers without any legal basis, when it is planning and executing terrorist acts, when it is part of the destabilization and economic war that negatively impact the life of the people and national stability.

In short, Alison, in Venezuela, we live today a vigorous, solid, permanent democracy. Our people make local, regional and national decisions every day through the various mechanisms that our model of democracy provides: participatory, proactive and deeply popular.

Certainly, we are going through economic difficulties developed by the enemies of the people. Our Bolivarian government is fully committed to overcoming them together with the people.

Contrary to what Mr. Almagro is obsessed

with disseminating, human rights in Venezuela are the centre of the work of state institutions. Great effort and resources are devoted to the strengthening, deepening and universalization of these rights, through programs and policies of inclusion, protection and social and economic development; the fruits of which are publicly recognized and reported. Such as the recent report published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the Human Development Index (HDI) 2016, in which our country maintained a high HDI (0.767), above Brazil (0.754), Peru (0.740) and Colombia (0.727). It must be emphasized, that this is in spite of the fact that the year 2016 passed in the worst possible conditions, as President Nicolás Maduro himself has called it: "the hardest and longest year."

In short, Bolivarian Venezuela is irrevocably free, independent and sovereign, and its republican institutions function at the service of the people. The legacy built and strengthened in Revolution is of that all

Venezuelans.

FTT: In March, Fire This Time participated in a very successful international campaign to defend Venezuela against the attempts of Luis Almagro to suspend Venezuela from the OAS. In this campaign, Fire This Time was joining with others around this world in response to a call for solidarity by President Maduro and Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez. I am wondering if you have further advice about what is needed for the activist and progressive community to defend the Bolivarian Revolutionary process today?

Wilfredo Pérez: This issue of international solidarity is very important. Precisely because of the latest developments in Venezuela and throughout our American region, I have been continually stating that it is imperative that we re-define or re-contextualize the word Solidarity. And it is not just a new conceptualization that is merely semantic or discursive. It is a matter of getting out of the "idea" and going to "action." Because, in addition to words we need actions, that is, real events in the material world that prevent the abrupt interruption of the progressive processes that have given so much hope to a large part of planet and that show us that a more just, more equitable and more habitable world is possible.

In Venezuela, solidarity with the peoples of the world is enshrined in our National Constitution. To be in solidarity with the world is an essential part of our culture, our politics and our conception as Nation.

This solidarity is imperative, necessary and urgent to face the dangers that arise against our progressive processes that, by the way, guarantee the continuity of that humanity, and to face the spiraling and uncontrolled development that the wild capitalism exerts on our countries, on our peoples and on the progressive governments that have assumed the reins of their own destiny.

Here we see the essence of Patria that the Eternal Commander Hugo Chávez bequeathed to us: respect for the principles of independence, equality between States, self-determination and, very importantly, non-intervention in internal affairs, we advocate for human rights and solidarity among the peoples in the struggle for emancipation and the welfare of humanity.

Solidarity among peoples, therefore, is to defend the future of our planet and to ensure that the progressive processes of integration between our peoples continue, and thus we can ensure the preservation of our Humanity, making each of us "more human towards humanity" (Alí Primera).

FTT: Thank you for your time.



★★★★★★★★

Entrevista con el Consul General de Venezuela

Wilfredo Pérez Bianco

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

"La solidaridad con los pueblos del Mundo, está consagrada en nuestra Constitución Nacional, es parte esencial de nuestra cultura, nuestra política y en nuestra concepción como Nación"

Por Alison Bodine

Al final de marzo de 2017, Fire This Time se reunió con Wilfredo J. Pérez Bianco, Cónsul General de Primera, Jefe de Misión en el Consulado General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Vancouver, Canadá para discutir las amenazas actuales de intervención extranjera contra Venezuela, y la importancia de la solidaridad internacional.

Fire This Time (FTT): Sabemos que hace mucho tiempo el gobierno de Estados Unidos y especialmente los gobiernos reaccionarios de América Latina han estado tratando de enmarcar y aislar al gobierno del presidente Maduro. Están tratando de aislar el impacto que tiene el proceso revolucionario de Venezuela sobre el conjunto de los pueblos latinoamericanos. Especialmente ahora, con la crisis más profunda dentro de las fuerzas burguesas pro-estadounidenses, contrarrevolucionarias en Venezuela, parece que EEUU y la OEA, con su marioneta Luis Almagro, quieren provocar, romper la unidad y polarizar a la OEA contra Venezuela. ¿Cómo explicas este campana de Almagro contra Venezuela?

Wilfredo Pérez Bianco: Primero que nada quiero agradecerle la oportunidad

que me brindas de poder dirigirme a tus lectores y ayudarles a comprender la verdadera situación actual que vive mi país, la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Y romper el cerco que la dictadura mediática internacional impone en el mundo, con sus grandes agencias de noticias y medios de comunicación masivos, que ya no cumplen una función social como lo es el de informar, violando el derecho humano que todos tenemos de recibir de ellos información veraz y oportuna; sino defienden sus propios intereses con mentiras, falsedades, manipulaciones, medias verdades y tergiversaciones, que tienen como finalidad última contribuir en la construcción de un ambiente que propicie la intervención extranjera, inclusive militar, en nuestro país. Aupada y solicitada por una oposición venezolana que no es capaz de buscar la solución política desde lo interno a través del dialogo y la participación política.

Ahora, respondiendo a tu pregunta:

Hemos visto con estupor (incluso horror) que desde que llegó el señor Luis Almagro a la Secretaría General de la OEA, este se ha dedicado a atacar a Venezuela y a su pueblo, una agresión obsesiva, como dijo nuestra Canciller Delcy Rodríguez, durante su intervención en el ilegítimo

Consejo Permanente del lunes 27 de marzo, convocado por el Secretario General.

Su desempeño ilícito, unilateral, arbitrario, desviado y parcializado, ya había motivado en la 46 Asamblea General de la Organización de Estados Americanos del 13 de junio de 2016, que se llevó a cabo en República Dominicana, se aprobara una Resolución originada por la preocupación profunda manifestada por los cancilleres de la Región, por la desviada actuación del señor Almagro.

Lo dijo nuestra Canciller, en esa misma sesión: Luis Almagro asumió funciones el 26 de mayo del año 2015, y no habían pasado más de 15 días cuando inició sus ataques y agresiones contra Venezuela. "Había llegado con un mandato muy claro a esta Organización, el primero de ellos, acabar con la Revolución Bolivariana; el segundo, sustituir al gobierno del Presidente Maduro y dar soporte internacional a las acciones violentas de la ultra derecha venezolana, socavando la soberanía y el estado de derecho mediante la desestabilización del país. Ya con la desaparición física de nuestro querido y amado Comandante Presidente Hugo Chávez, líder de la Revolución Bolivariana, había arreciado el plan para cercar a Venezuela".

Esta Guerra No Convencional contra Venezuela, ha sido una agresión permanente de los poderes fácticos internacionales, financieros y mediáticos, como sabemos, respaldado, aupados y coordinado desde

Protesta en Miranda, Venezuela. 28 de marzo, 2017



Washington.

Alison, una muestra muy clara de la obstinada dedicación a atacar nuestro país, lo representa el hecho de que desde su cuenta tuit, ha dedicado prácticamente el 21% de sus tuits, es decir, 1 de cada cinco a la campaña contra Venezuela. 21% de los tuits los dedica a Venezuela y el resto a la agenda hemisférica. Además, el Secretario ha sostenido, que se hayan podido contabilizar, solamente entre el 2016 y 2017, veintiséis reuniones con la oposición venezolana, de los cuales el 57% ha sido con los militantes de Voluntad Popular, facción de la ultra derecha extremista, la más violenta en el país.

Así pues, el señor Almagro ha violentado un conjunto de normas por su actuación desviada, ilícita, arbitraria y parcializada. Como por ejemplo, el propio Artículo 1 de la Carta de la OEA, la Organización de los Estados Americanos no tiene facultades ni está autorizado para intervenir en asuntos de la jurisdicción interna de los Estados Miembros, entre otras.

Sin embargo, recordemos que la OEA viene de una larga y vulgar historia de intervención en nuestro continente a favor del imperialismo norteamericano. Como lo dijo la canciller durante su intervención: La OEA ha sido “un instrumento diplomático a través del cual Estados Unidos actuando como maquinaria militar, comercial, cultural y financiera, ha impuesto no sólo su modelo de explotación sino también ha sometido a

pueblos enteros a la más infame violación de los derechos humanos”.

FTT: El 31 de marzo, la Corte Suprema de Venezuela dictaminó que asumiría temporalmente el rol del Poder Legislativo en Venezuela. Hace dos días, revirtieron esta decisión. ¿Puede elaborar sobre esto? ¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre cómo se está desarrollando la relación entre el gobierno revolucionario de Nicolás Maduro y las fuerzas burguesas en Venezuela?

Wilfredo Pérez: Sí, como sabemos la actual Asamblea Nacional (AN) se ha auto-inhabilitado para ejercer sus funciones al desacatar sistemáticamente las diversas sentencias del Tribunal Supremo de Justicia (TSJ) y al cometer ilícitos constitucionales y diversos delitos penales.

Pero también es cierto que el Estado venezolano no puede paralizarse porque el Poder Legislativo, en manos de un partido de oposición, como lo es la MUD, haya decidido utilizar este espacio para darle golpes continuos a la Constitución. Por eso el TSJ, cumpliendo su función de resguardar el orden constitucional, ha establecido los lineamientos de corrección ante la persistente omisión legislativa (la AN dejó de hacer leyes), conforme lo establece claramente el artículo 336 de la Constitución, numeral 7.

Es decir, el Tribunal Supremo dictaminó que el permanente desacato inhabilita al Poder Legislativo para ejercer sus funciones constitucionales. Entonces apelando

al artículo 336.7 de la Constitución el TSJ declara que existe “omisión inconstitucional parlamentaria”.

Este principio constitucional le permite al TSJ establecer “lineamientos de corrección” en caso de omisión. De esta manera el TSJ corrige, siguiendo los mandatos de la constitución, facultando al Ejecutivo el poder crear empresas mixtas (mientras que la AN está en desacato). Igualmente el mismo TSJ va asumir de manera accidental y momentánea funciones de la AN para cubrir el vacío mientras que se mantiene el desacato.

De esta manera podemos demostrar

claramente que es totalmente falsa la idea de que el presidente Maduro ha disuelto la Asamblea Nacional o ha violado el Estado de derecho, tal y como la derecha continental y la dictadura mediática nacional e internacional ha hecho creer al mundo. Más fácil aún, no es el presidente Maduro el que ha actuado, sino el TSJ.

El TSJ lo que está haciendo es proteger al país de no tener un parlamento. Proteger al país de los continuos intentos de golpe que se pretenden dar desde la AN. Proteger al país de un poder inconstitucional que solicita una intervención extranjera ante potencias hostiles. Proteger al país del plan de la derecha nacional e internacional de poner en jaque al pueblo y a las instituciones de la República.

Sin embargo, el mismo TSJ corrige y suprime parcialmente sus fallos, asegurando que no va a asumir las facultades de la AN y que garantizará la inmunidad de los parlamentarios. Después de que la Fiscalía General de la República anunciara su discrepancia con las decisiones adoptadas por el TSJ. Surge así una diferencia mayor, entre tres de los cinco Poderes Públicos de la República. Ante este impasse el presidente Maduro convoca al Consejo Nacional de Defensa, con la finalidad de que el TSJ revisara el fallo. Lo que demostró, en la práctica, que en Venezuela sí existe una separación de poderes, y está en pleno funcionamiento una democracia participativa, protagónica y popular.

Mientras tanto, la AN continúa sin corregir sus desviaciones y se mantiene en desacato.

Por lo tanto, la denuncia que hace la derecha de un supuesto “golpe” o “autogolpe” en Venezuela, es parte de un mismo discurso y de una misma estrategia de legitimación de una intervención extranjera en el país.

Golpe de Estado es lo que la derecha intenta cometer continuamente cuando desacata las decisiones del TSJ, cuando promueve la intervención extranjera, cuando pretende activar mecanismos inconstitucionales para derrocar al gobierno legítimo y democráticamente electo por el pueblo, cuando pretende destituir a las autoridades de los demás poderes públicos sin fundamento jurídico alguno, cuando planifica y ejecuta actos terroristas, cuando forma parte de las acciones de desestabilización y guerra económica que impactan negativamente sobre la vida del pueblo y la estabilidad nacional.

En definitiva estimada Alison, en Venezuela vivimos en la actualidad una democracia vigorosa, sólida, permanente. Nuestro pueblo toma decisiones locales, regionales y nacionales todos los días a través de los diversos mecanismos que prevé nuestro modelo de democracia: participativa, protagónica y profundamente popular.

Ciertamente, atravesamos por dificultades económicas desarrolladas por los enemigos del pueblo y nuestro gobierno bolivariano está plenamente entregado a superarlas junto al pueblo.

Contrariamente a lo que el señor Almagro se obsesiona en difundir, los derechos humanos en Venezuela son el centro del quehacer de las instituciones del Estado. El fortalecimiento, profundización y universalización de estos derechos se destinan grandes esfuerzos y recursos, mediante programas y políticas de inclusión, protección y desarrollo social y económico; los cuales rinden sus frutos, que son públicos, notorios y comunicacionales, como el reciente informe publicado por el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) sobre el Índice de Desarrollo Humano 2016, en el cual nuestro país mantuvo un Alto IDH (0,767), por encima de Brasil (0,754), Perú (0,740) y Colombia (0,727). A pesar, y hay que resaltarlo, de haber transitado el año 2016 en las peores condiciones posibles, como lo ha denominado el propio presidente Nicolás Maduro: “el año más duro y largo”.

En definitiva, Venezuela Bolivariana es irrevocablemente libre, independiente y soberana, y sus instituciones republicanas funcionan al servicio del pueblo. Patrimonio construido y fortalecido en Revolución que es de todas y todos los venezolanos.

FTT: En marzo, Fire This Time participó en una exitosa campaña internacional para



defender a Venezuela contra los intentos de Luis Almagro de suspender a Venezuela de la OEA. En esta campaña, Fire This Time se unió a otros alrededor del mundo en respuesta a un llamado a la solidaridad por el Presidente Maduro y el Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores Delcy Rodríguez. Te pregunto si tienes más consejos sobre lo que la comunidad activista y progresista puede hacer para defender el proceso revolucionario bolivariano hoy?

Wilfredo Pérez: Este es un asunto muy importante, el de la solidaridad internacional. He venido manifestando continuamente, justamente a raíz de los últimos acontecimientos en Venezuela y en toda la región nuestroamericana, que es imperativo re significar o re contextualizar la palabra Solidaridad. Y no se trata sólo de una nueva conceptualización meramente semántica o discursiva. Se trata de salir del “tema” e irnos a la “acción”, porque además de discursos necesitamos acciones, es decir, incidencias reales en el mundo material que impidan la interrupción abrupta de los procesos progresistas que han dado tanta esperanza a una gran parte de planeta y que nos indica que sí es posible un mundo más justo, más equitativo, más habitable.

La solidaridad con los pueblos del Mundo, en Venezuela, está consagrada en nuestra Constitución Nacional, es parte esencial de nuestra cultura, nuestra política y en nuestra concepción como Nación, el ser solidarios con el mundo.

Una solidaridad que se hace imperativa, necesaria y urgente, para enfrentar los peligros que se ciernen no sólo sobre nuestros procesos progresistas que, por cierto garantizan la continuidad de esa Humanidad, sino también el desarrollo vertiginoso y descontrolado que el capitalismo salvaje ejerce sobre nuestros países, sobre nuestros pueblos y sobre los gobierno progresistas que han asumido las riendas de su propio destino.

Aquí vemos la esencia de Patria que nos legó el Comandante Eterno Hugo Chávez: respeto a los principios de independencia, igualdad entre los Estados, libre determinación y, muy importante, la no intervención en los asuntos internos, abogamos por los derechos humanos y la solidaridad ente los pueblos en la lucha por su emancipación y el bienestar de la humanidad.

La solidaridad entre los pueblos, es por tanto, defender el futuro de nuestro planeta y garantizar que los procesos progresistas y de integración entre nuestros pueblos continúen, y así podamos asegurar la preservación de nuestra Humanidad, haciendo cada uno de nosotros “más humana a la humanidad” (Alí Primera).

FTT: Gracias por este entrevista.

**SYSTEM CHANGE
— NOT —
CLIMATE CHANGE**

WE ARE DEMANDING BIG CHANGES!

HOW CAPITALISM IS DESTROYING EARTH WITH POVERTY & ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

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By Thomas Davies

Sometimes the truth is crazier than fiction. Canadian Aerospace and rail giant Bombardier is in the process of laying off 7,500 workers. They have received 3.7 billion dollars in different government assistance to survive. They lost \$981 million last year. So, what did their executives decide to do? They gave themselves a 50% raise - sharing \$32.6 million between 6 of them!

As public protests continued in front of the company's offices, Bombardier executives tried to appease the massive public outcry by "delaying" their compensation packages. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, for his part, supported the government bailout and the executive's decision to raise their own earnings, "We respect the free market and the choices that companies will make."

Meanwhile a recent OXFAM report found the two richest people in Canada are as wealthy as the poorest 30 per cent, as Canada and all other industrialized countries show a continuing trend of rapidly widening income inequality.

British Columbians are being forced to pay 40 million to clean up the worst mining spill in Canadian history. Imperial Metal Corporations has escaped with no sanctions and no fines for its responsibility for the Mount Polley mine spill. In August 2014, its 40-metre-high tailings dam collapsed, sending 25-million cubic metres of contaminated sludge and mine waste into lakes and rivers.

In Alberta, an independent assessment found



that the vast majority of oil company plans to deal with the extensive toxic ponds that cover more than 220 square kilometres and contain almost 1.2 trillion litres of contaminated water don't meet government rules. Toxic materials include bitumen, naphthenic acids, cyanide and heavy metals. Alberta's auditor general has estimated the environmental liability of the tailings ponds at \$20.8 billion.

Within all this absurdity, Justin Trudeau also received a standing ovation and an award this month from 1200 oil company big-wigs in Texas - for his incomprehensible position that developing fossil fuel resources can go "hand

in hand" with fighting climate change. This comes after he approved the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 pipelines, and was an instant cheerleader for US President Trump's announcement that the Keystone XL pipeline project was being brought back from the dead.

The night Justin Trudeau received his gala award in a tuxedo,

35,000 people were homeless in Canada. 235,000 people experienced homelessness in Canada in 2016.

South of the Border

Things are looking just as absurd in the United States. President Trump signed an executive order on March 28 aimed at undoing the bulk of any new environmental protections brought in under Obama. The order will instruct federal regulators to the Clean Power Plan rules that curb U.S. carbon emissions, as well as halt other environmental regulations. He has also appointed Scott Pruitt as the Environmental Protection Agency's new administrator. Mr Pruitt is notorious for climate science denial - and he has sued the agency he now heads several times!

Trump's justification for getting rid of all the environmental regulations is that protecting the environment puts people out of work. He focused especially on the coal industry and had coal executives and workers play major roles in his press conferences. As usual though - it's a big deception. Firstly, while coal job is important to 50,000 people in the U.S. employed by them, they represent an incredible fraction of the jobs and economy of the U.S. As the Washington Post put it, "Arby's [the fast food restaurant] employs more people."



Coal jobs also aren't just disappearing because of environmental regulations, companies are laying off workers due to automation. Also, the ever-dropping prices of renewable energy sources like solar and wind make coal and all its associated environmental damage an increasingly expensive and unattractive energy source. It doesn't make sense to try and push workers towards an unsustainable industry that is clearly on its way out.

Globally

A recent article in the leading US business magazine Forbes opened by stating, "Capitalism has generated massive wealth for some, but it's devastated the planet and has failed to improve human well-being at scale." It then went on to site, "Species are going extinct at a rate 1,000 times faster than that of the natural rate over the previous 65 million years," and "Since 2000, 6 million hectares of primary forest have been lost each year. That's 14,826,322 acres..."

The United Nations Development Program conservatively estimates that one in three people globally is malnourished and that one in 10 lives in extreme poverty. "At the same time, the world's richest 1 percent hold nearly half the world's wealth."

So, What Next?

Something is not right. Actually, a lot of things are not right. We need solutions to a humanitarian and planetary crisis, but capitalist world leaders like Trump and Trudeau keep trying to force the world backwards and tie the economy and our planet to a system which has shown itself to be unsustainable at best. That's the reason why protest the Kinder Morgan pipeline has been so strong in Canada – because people understand that these kinds of projects represent long term investments to a kind of world we can't afford to live in.

People are fighting back, and standing up to threats, intimations and bribery attempts by governments and their corporate friends.

After a 12 year, national "No to Mining, Yes to Life!" campaign, El Salvador just voted to become the first country in the world to ban

metal mining. People overcame the murders of community organizers and a massive lawsuit by Canadian-Australian OceanaGold Corporation to create this historic victory.

Before this in 2015, the Lax Kw'alaams Nation voted to reject a 1.15 billion dollar offer by Petronas corporation to give their consent to an natural gas plant and pipeline on their territory in Northern BC. The Gixtan Nation have also continued to organize the Madii Lii camp to block the development, even as the Federal and Provincial governments have tried to force the project through without the consent of indigenous nations.

Creating a New World

In 2012, Bolivian President Evo Morales, a socialist and the first-ever indigenous head of state, gave a historic speech at the Isla del Sol. In it he said,



Protesters gather in front of the World Bank to protest a lawsuit by Oceana Gold against El Salvador in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 15, 2014.

"Today the societies and peoples of the developed countries are tragically experiencing the capitalist crisis created by its own market. Capitalist governments think that it is more important to save the banks than to save human beings, and it is more important to save the companies than to save people. In the capitalist system the banks have priority economic rights and enjoy first-class citizenship, which is why we can say that the banks are worth more than life. In this unfettered capitalism, individuals and peoples are not brothers and sisters, they are not citizens, they are not human beings; individuals and peoples are debt defaulters, borrowers, tenants and clients; in short, if people do not have money, they are nothing.

We are living in the kingdom of the colour green. Green like dollars are the monetary policies, green like dollars are the development policies, green like dollars are the housing policies,

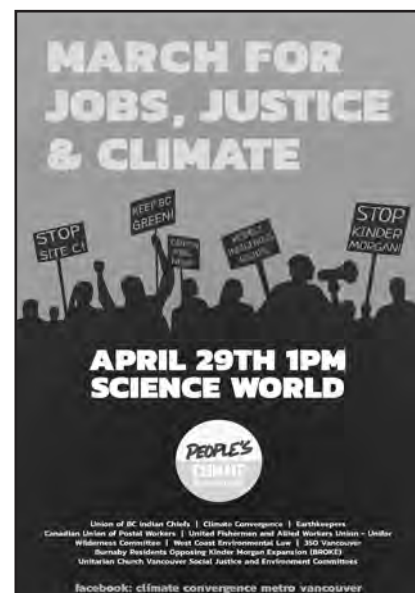


green like dollars are the human development policies and environmental policies. That is why, faced with the new wave of crisis of the capitalist system, its ideologues have come out in favour of privatizing nature through the so-called green economy or green capitalism.

However, the recipes of the market, of liberalism, of privatization simply generate poverty and exclusion, hunger and marginalization."

The world needs tremendous changes, and the Trumps and Trudeaus and the Bombardiers and Kinder Morgans of the world are trying to convince us to use the same methods to solve the problems as we used to create them. Imagine if the Canadian government spent 3.7 billion on re-training workers in sustainable industries instead of bailing out failing corporations! Now more than ever we need to stand up to defend the planet and the people. On April 29 people around the world will be mobilizing as part of the Peoples Climate Mobilization. Make sure to join us on the streets to make the reasonable and necessary demand, "System Change Not Climate Change!"

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



FROM STANDING ROCK TO BC MAKE THE LAND PIPELINE FREE!



By Thomas Davies

True to its name, the Climate Convergence coalition in Vancouver has continued to stay busy campaigning for climate justice. One of the main activities has become regular “IntersActions” - where participants flood an intersection on all sides with people crossing with signs and banners. The flow of traffic continues, but there is maximum visibility and many people attracted to an information table set up adjacent to the intersection.

On March 10, Climate Convergence co-organized a Day of Action with the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion to help launch a new campaign against TD Bank. The reason for focusing on TD is its principle role in supporting two pipeline projects which violate indigenous sovereignty and put the environment at risk.

TD is one of the main financiers of the Dakota Access Pipeline project in the U.S., having issued \$365 million in loans to facilitate the hotly contested pipeline. TD is also acting as the principal broker for Kinder Morgan,

helping it raise the capital it needs to try to ram through the Trans Mountain Expansion tar sands pipeline and tanker project over the very clear objections of indigenous nations.

March 10 saw a noontime rally in front of the TD Tower in downtown Vancouver with representatives of Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion and the Union on BC Indian Chiefs, as well as many environmental organizations. The rally was also able to attract major news media and television coverage.

Later that day, the busy downtown rush hour traffic heard and saw another IntersAction as participants held banners, chanted and distributed information for two hours straight in front of the bank.

The momentum has continued

to build the April 29th Peoples Climate Mobilization. Climate Convergence is organizing weekly IntersActions as part of the buildup to the major demonstration. The first action kicked off at Broadway and

Climate Convergence outreach tent in Vancouver



Commercial with two huge banners reading, “Climate Justice Now” and “No Kinder Morgan Pipeline! No Consent No Pipeline!” Organizers again attracted a lot of attention with the chanting and marching, and distributed hundred of leaflets promoting the April 29th mobilization.

As Justin Trudeau, Christy Clark and corporations like Kinder Morgan, Dakota Access and Toronto Dominion spend millions to promote these pipeline projects, it's important that climate justice organizers continue to organize in public and give voice to our important and necessary concerns. IntersActions have proven to be a very effective way to educate, organize and mobilize.



*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
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HOW THE OAS IS UNDERMINING VENEZUELA'S SOVEREIGNTY

By Alison Bodine

Almost two decades ago, the people of Venezuela chose to change their history and build a country along a different path than that dictated by the U.S. government. They elected President Hugo Chávez and began the Bolivarian revolution, a powerful process of social and political transformation that continues to make great gains in the lives of poor and oppressed people in Venezuela.

This self-determination and sovereignty that the people of Venezuela, today led by President Nicolás Maduro and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), have fought for has come under constant assault from forces both inside and outside of Venezuela. They have faced relentless violence, economic war and destabilization attempts by Venezuela's counter-revolutionary capitalist class, as well as threats, sanctions and other forms covert and overt intervention by the United States and their allies.

Intensifying Campaign Against Venezuela

In the last week of March, 2017, the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela came under a renewed assault. The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), a U.S. puppet named Luis Almagro, launched new campaign to attempt to demonize and isolate the government of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution.

This campaign began when 14 members of the OAS signed a letter threatening to suspend Venezuela's membership based on inflated

and unproven allegations that Venezuela is in violation of the "Democratic Charter" of the OAS. These 14 countries included right-wing governments in Latin America as well as the United States and Canada, a minority of the 34 member-states of the OAS.

Then, on March 28, 2017 the OAS met in Washington, DC, and took their threats against Venezuela's sovereignty one step farther. At the meeting, the regional organizations Secretary General Almagro, had one vicious intention - to put the internal politics of member-state Venezuela on the agenda.

According to reports from participating countries, the meeting was fraught with organizational irregularities. Not the least being that Article 18 of that forbids intervention by member-states "directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State."

In the end, there was no vote on whether or not to "open a formal debate on whether Venezuela is democratic enough to remain a full member of the Inter-American System," which was the question that the right-wing was trying to put on the agenda. Instead, Almagro and his right-wing allies are now relying on a letter signed by 20 of the 34 member-states, to show that they do, indeed, have the mandate to open such a debate.

So, if there in fact was no intention of actually coming to some sort of regional agreement about Venezuela, what was the entire spectacle about?

The March 28 meeting was part of an

intentional and vicious campaign to demonize and provoke the government of Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution, and to polarize and divide the OAS.

Although this was not the subject of the meeting, the United States, Canada and right-wing governments in Latin America all took the opportunity to publically support the idea that Venezuela should be suspended from the OAS.

In attendance from the United States was Michael Fitzpatrick, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere who stated, "We need to act with urgency and clarity of purpose for indeed, as the saying goes, the whole world is watching," and "This is an important day for the OAS, which is fulfilling its responsibility to safeguard democracy." He also called on the Venezuelan government to "comply with its constitution and constitutional functions, hold elections as soon as possible and release all political prisoners, including Leopoldo López."

These are dangerous words, especially when spoken by a diplomat from the United States, a country that has labeled Venezuela as an "extraordinary threat to U.S. national security," imposed damaging sanctions and continues to give political and financial support to Venezuela's violent opposition.

What is the Role of the Organization of American States (OAS)?

According to their website, the Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional body established in 1948 as an organization with the mandate to create in the Americas "an



order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.”

None of those noble and righteous words are what was on the table at the March 28 meeting of the OAS. In fact, Luis Almagro was lobbying for just the opposite – international intervention in Venezuela in violation of their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.

Ever since becoming Secretary General of the OAS in May of 2015, Luis Almagro has displayed his bias and opportunism against Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution. All the evidence required to prove his allegiance can be seen with a quick scroll through his social media Twitter account. Especially in the last two weeks, a vast majority of his posts on Twitter (known as tweets) are about Venezuela, and they are often photos of his meetings with U.S. diplomats and members of Congress, or with the leaders of Venezuela’s opposition. Overall, as reported by the Foreign Minister of Venezuela, Delcy Rodríguez, 21% of all of his tweets since becoming Secretary General of the OAS have been leveled against the government of Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution.

Luis Almagro has also met with Venezuela’s opposition at least 26 times in the last barely two years. Needless to say, this extreme bias is in violation of his mandate as the Secretary General of the OAS.

The hands of the U.S. intervention are also all over this latest escalation against Venezuela. Prior to the March 28 meeting of the OAS, member-states reported that members of US Congress had written to them about the upcoming meeting. El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Haiti also reported that U.S. Senator and former republican Presidential candidate Marco Rubio had attempted to bully them into taking a stand in the OAS against Venezuela’s sovereignty by saying directly, “We have a very difficult

situation in Washington, where massive cuts in foreign aid are under consideration and it will be very difficult for us to justify assistance to those countries if they, at the end of the day, are countries that do not cooperate in the defense of democracy in the region.” Here we have Marco Rubio interfering in the internal decision making of member-states of the OAS!

Provocation for Foreign Intervention in Venezuela

The struggle within the OAS continues, but what is more significant than the meeting that took place between those four walls in Washington, DC on March 28 is what that meeting embodied – the latest attempt by the U.S. government and the capitalist class in Venezuela to provoke international intervention in Venezuela leading to the overthrow of President Nicolas Maduro.

Taking a closer look at the opportunistic words of Almagro definitely sheds some light on his true intentions, but first, let us examine the word of his bosses.

People such as former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who in 2014 stated that “the

Organization of American States (OAS), allies and neighbours should demand accountability of Venezuela over the protests,” as reported by the BBC. The “protests” that John Kerry is referring to here are actually violent street riots organized by counter-revolutionaries in Venezuela.

In March, Almagro released a 74 page report on Venezuela, wrought with lies and distortions that could have come directly from the mouths of these U.S. government officials. As Venezuela’s Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez described, the report is meant to “interfere with Venezuela, not only to remove president Maduro, but also to develop a complex scheme. This new agenda differs from the old one in the sense that it opens the intervention strategy in order to impose a model similar to the neoliberal governments that today strike the region.”

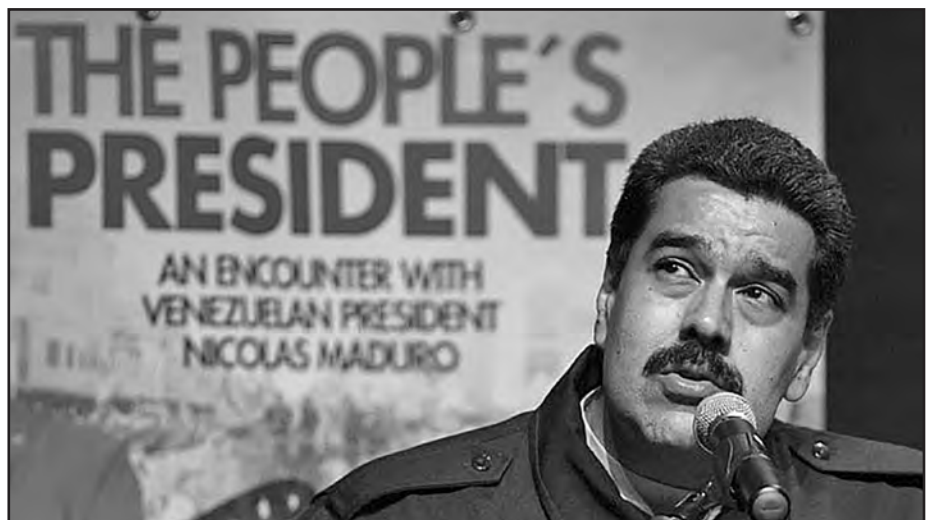
Democracy in Venezuela

Among the key points of his report, Almagro states that Venezuela must return to a “functioning democracy.” However, the last 19 years of the Bolivarian Revolution have actually shown that Venezuela’s democratic system is very much alive.

Venezuela is one of only a few countries in the world whose Constitution has given its people the right to recall any elected official who has served out greater than 50% of their term, including the President.

Starting in April of 2016, after much infighting, the counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela began their attempt to carry out a recall-referendum against President Nicolas Maduro. However, eventually they were not able to even begin the official referendum, as they failed to collect the 2 million preliminary signatures needed as laid out in the Venezuelan Constitution. When Venezuela’s National Electoral Council (CNE) attempted to verify the signatures, 30.9% of them were found to be invalid, including more than 10,900 that came from deceased people.

Furthermore, if there is anything





undemocratic about Venezuela, it is not the government of Venezuela and President Nicolas Maduro, as Almagro states, who are responsible for retuning Venezuela to a “functioning democracy.” It is instead the majority right-wing National Assembly. This is because the National Assembly has been operating in contempt of court for over a year, after swearing in three parliamentarians whose elections were annulled due to cases of voter fraud.

Strangely enough, Almagro’s report suggests that Venezuela could “restore democracy” by holding general elections immediately. However, as per Venezuela’s Constitution, the next Presidential election is not due to take place until 2018. Holding elections earlier would actually be in violation of Venezuela’s Constitution.

Almagro and the OAS do not care about democracy in Venezuela, what they want is international intervention in Venezuela.

“Political Prisoners” in Venezuela

Almagro’s report also calls on the immediate release of so-called political prisoners in Venezuela. This is another statement that just as easily could have come from the mouth of US President Trump himself. In fact, it already did, when Trump tweeted for the release of Venezuelan prisoner Leopaldo Lopez on February 15.

Leopaldo is just one of the prisoners in Venezuela that have been labeled by counter-revolutionary forces and mainstream media as “political prisoners.” This includes prisoners that have been charged and convicted of crimes such as arson and treason, primarily for their involvement and leadership in violent street riots in 2014 that killed 43 people in Venezuela known as the “Guarimbas.”

“Humanitarian Assistance” for Venezuela

As a final demand, Almagro’s report on Venezuela also calls for “The immediate establishment of a channel to provide humanitarian assistance (with emphasis on food and medical assistance) to the people of Venezuela.”

Once again, Almagro’s demands are misdirected. Especially since the December, 2015 parliamentary elections, Venezuela’s capitalist class has intensified its economic war. This has included massive hoarding and under-production of foods and everyday necessities, creating empty shelves and long-lines at stores for many people in Venezuela. It is not a “humanitarian corridor” that is needed, but an end to this crisis manufactured by those in Venezuela who wish to overthrow the government of Nicolas Maduro and reverse the gains of the Bolivarian revolution.

Mainstream Media Lies and Manipulations

The mainstream media was right there waiting for their time to shine in this latest demonization campaign against Venezuela. They will take any opportunity they can get to once again claim that Venezuela is on the “road to dictatorship.” As part of Almagro’s escalating witch-hunt against President Nicolas Maduro and the government of Venezuela, Western media gave him ample space in which to explain his views and analysis. This included the usual suspects such as the New York Times and Washington Post, but also National Public Radio and the Globe and Mail here in Canada.

One of their main attacks was an opinion piece written by Luis Almagro himself. His piece is full of the rhetoric against the government of Venezuela, none of it based on facts. It ends with a direct appeal “That is why I have proposed – in a short period of

time, within one month, a truly democratic path with clear signals in that direction, including the release of prisoners, a timetable for elections, the opening of a humanitarian channel – the suspension of Venezuela from the OAS, provided for in Article 21 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Because there is no other way. The 33 countries of the region must show unity and take a stand in defence of the democracy under attack.”

Try looking for anything about the government of Venezuela’s response to the allegations of Almagro in Western mainstream media and you will come up empty-handed. Time and time again they have proven themselves to be a mouthpiece of U.S. government policy and these latest attacks on Venezuela are no exception.

Sovereignty and Self-determination

“Venezuela has the necessary laws to resolve its internal situations, with mechanisms consistent with the full exercise of its sovereignty... Each country must resolve its affairs with constitutional mechanisms” – Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro, April 1, 2017

That is it, pure and simple. Venezuela has the right to self-determination and sovereignty, no matter what form of government the people of Venezuela have chosen.

These latest attacks by Luis Almagro, the U.S. government and their allies in the OAS are a clear and dangerous violation of these principles.

However, it is also important to note that these attacks in the OAS are also desperate measures, by a weakened and fractured counter-revolution in Venezuela. Ever since the election of a majority right-wing National Assembly in December of 2015, cracks in the opposition coalition have actually grown deeper. Their efforts to overthrow the government of Nicolas Maduro have so far failed, leaving them wounded and crying for help from the international community.

That is why our actions in defense of Venezuela, the government of Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution are so necessary. Peace and justice-loving people around the world must be on-guard for Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution now more than ever. The attacks by Luis Almagro and the OAS are far from over. With the U.S. government taking the lead there can be no doubt that their attempts to isolate Venezuela, and to quarantine the effect that the Bolivarian Revolution has had on the people’s of Latin America will continue to intensify.

**LUIS ALMAGRO MUST GO!
U.S. & CANADA RESPECT
THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-
DETERMINATION OF THE
VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!
LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN
BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!**

Short History of OAS/U.S. Intervention in Latin America

The OAS has long been recognized a tool for U.S. intervention in Latin America. This became especially clear when Cuba, a country that had finally won their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, was banned from the OAS following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

There is a reason that the OAS has been so discredited throughout Latin America. They have served the interests of the United States government faithfully over for more than 60 years, and through more than 50 coup d'états in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In fact, there are times when the OAS actually supported a U.S. military invasion. The first of which was the U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba by counter-revolutionary mercenaries in 1960. This attack, known as the Bay of Pigs, was a failed attempt by the United States to defeat the recently triumphant Cuban Revolution.

Then, in 1965 the United States launched a military invasion of the Dominican Republic. This invasion was not only supported by the OAS, the puppet organization also sent a pan-Latin American invasion force to assist the United States in preventing the victory of a leftist leaning government on the island.

For more than the next 25 years, the OAS was silent as hundreds of thousands of people in Latin America were murdered and disappeared by brutal U.S.-backed dictatorships and U.S.-funded and supported right-wing counter-revolutionaries and paramilitary death-squads.

Since then the OAS has continued to show its alliance with the United States. It never recognized the coup d'état against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 2002. In the case of the coup d'état against Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti in 2004, and against President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras in 2009, the OAS did take initial steps towards recognition of the coup d'état's, but they were quickly sidelined by the influence of the United States and their allies in the regional organization.

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette



Viva Chavez! Viva Fidel!

4 Years Since the Passing of Comandante Chavez: Fire This Time Editorial Board Member Tamara Hansen Speaks on the Ongoing Legacy of Fidel and Chavez

By Janine Solanki

On March 5th, 2013, the world lost a forefront leader and fighter in the struggle for a better world, when Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez passed away. Now four years later, the anniversary of Comandante Chavez's passing is a time to reflect on his enormous contribution towards the betterment of humanity, and his ongoing legacy. On March 2nd, the Hugo Chávez Defense Front - Southwest Canada Chapter organized a forum at the Chilean Housing Coop in Vancouver. Fire This Time Editorial Board member Tamara Hansen was invited to speak, alongside Venezuelan Consul General Wilfredo José Pérez Bianco

and writer and researcher Nino Pagliccia.

Consul General Wilfredo Bianco gave an overview of the life of Hugo Chavez, focusing on his political development and growing consciousness that led to him becoming the leader the world knows him for. Nino Pagliccia spoke on Chavez's childhood and relayed stories from his early life. Tamara Hansen, on behalf of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) spoke about the legacy of Hugo Chavez alongside the legacy of the great revolutionary Fidel Castro who also recently passed away on November 25, 2016. Chavez often referred to Fidel as his political father, and their legacy together is one of a continued and growing revolutionary movement, especially in Latin America, against imperialism, for self-determination and for the construction of a better and more just world.



The program of the event also featured greetings from various organizations including Maria Luisa Melendez on behalf of the FMLN Vancouver (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), Victor Pardo on behalf of URNG Maiz (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity), and Mayra Climaco, Nicaraguan activist. The evening also included the beautiful poetry of longtime Chilean activist Oscar Villalobos.

In the four years since the passing of Comandante Chavez and just a few short months since the passing of Comandante Fidel Castro, their legacy lives on in the struggle of people around the world against injustice and for creating a better world!

*Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:
@janinesolanki*



By Janine Solanki

Venezuela today is a country working to create a better and more just society for its people. Under former President Chavez and continuing now with President Maduro, the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela has made huge gains to improve housing, healthcare, education and literacy in Venezuela. Even Venezuela's constitution was rewritten to enshrine in law important advances such as the rights of women, Indigenous people and the environment.

Despite the huge and commendable progress made in Venezuela, the right-wing ruling class in Venezuela, supported by the US government, has done

Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. This included US sanctions against Venezuela's new Vice President Tareck El Aissami and a heightened Western media campaign demonizing Vice President Aissami, President Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution, setting the stage for further US intervention in Venezuela.

The Bolivarian Revolution is fighting not just to improve the lives of the Venezuelan people, but fighting for a better world for us all. It is up to solidarity activists around the world to stand up in solidarity with Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. In response to these imperialist attacks, International Days of Action in Solidarity with Venezuela were called for by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity.

Campaign has organized these picket actions every month. Protesters held up signs demanding "US Hands Off Venezuela!" and "Self-Determination for Venezuela" while picketing in front of the US Consulate. Along with local speakers, protesters also heard from William Camacaro from the Bolivarian Circle of New York "Alberto Lovera" who spoke from New York over the phone.

The protest then continued in the busy downtown Vancouver center in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, where activists setup an information display complete with a huge Venezuelan flag. Passers-by stopped to find out more about what is really happening in Venezuela, beyond the Western media manipulations, and were asked to sign on to a petition demanding that the US stop their intervening and



everything it can to claw back at every step forward by the Bolivarian Revolution. In the last few years this has included an economic war fueled by US sanctions, the US and Saudi Arabia flooding the market with cheap oil to drive down the worth of Venezuela's oil, and wealthy production owners in Venezuela cutting food and goods production and hoarding to create shortages and higher prices for food and goods.

In March the US government and their allies escalated their attacks against the

As part of these International Days of Action, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign participated in an international twitter campaign on March 2nd. Using the hashtag #VenezuelaSeRespeta, Vancouver activists tweeted their support for Venezuela and Venezuelan President @NicolasMaduro directed at US President Trump @Potus.

Then on March 3rd, Venezuela supporters gathered for a picket action in front of the US consulate. Since December 2015, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity

sanctions against Venezuela.

Now more than ever, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution needs the solidarity of peace and justice loving people around the world. The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign will be out on the streets every month in defense of Venezuela. To join in or find out more, check out www.firethistime.net or follow on Twitter @FTT_np

*Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:
@janinesolanki*

NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO FIGHT FOR THE FULL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN U.S. & CUBA A GREAT SUCCESS!

By Tamara Hansen

The “National Conference to Fight for the Full Normalization of Relations between the U.S. and Cuba” was held in New York City March 25-26, 2017. This two-day conference brought together people from across the U.S. and around the world to discuss how to push for the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, following the initial announcement of ‘the U.S.-Cuba thaw’ by U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro on December 17, 2014.

Of course, even now, over two years later, relations between the two countries are not fully normalized.



National Conference for Cuba kicks off in New York City
The night before the conference, over 200

Throughout the weekend, over 300 people attended the conference representing at least 18 American states, 3 Canadian provinces, as well as England, Puerto Rico, and of course, Cuba!

Saturday began with an opening by conference organizer Ike Nahem, organizer with Cuba Solidarity New

Speaking on the importance of solidarity, Miguel Barnet Lanza, Cuban novelist, poet, and president of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists, said: “We Cubans are deeply proud of the solidarity expressed by people around the world to Cuba and particularly to the Cuban revolutionary process. Solidarity is one of the basic principles of the Cuban revolution led by Fidel and Raul. The word ‘solidarity’ carries the most sensitive feeling of Cubans who live on the island. We were raised under this concept, and it has been a daily practice for all of us. How can we analyze or discuss issues of the revolutionary life if we do not take into account what we have done all over the world, not to mention medical aid to poor people, education or political support to countries that have suffered criminal and illegal wars?”

Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Cuba’s Ambassador to the United Nations, explained at the conference, “Some progress has been made in bilateral relations, mainly in diplomatic affairs, dialogue and cooperation on various issues of common interest. However, these steps, together with the executive measures adopted by the previous US Government, although they are in the right way, are still insufficient. The reality is that the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba remains in force, including its extraterritorial scope, and continues to cause enormous damage and deprivation to our people and our economy. The reality is that the return of the territory illegally occupied by the United States Naval Base in Guantanamo is still pending, against the will of Cuban people.” These were some of the concerns the conference hoped to address through its plenaries, workshops, music, culture, and, most importantly, developing an action plan.

people attended an evening of delicious Cuban food, drinks, and enjoyment at the Headquarters of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Ambassador to the United Nations for Cuba, warmly greeted and welcomed the crowd to the event.

The next day the conference began at Fordham University in New York City.

York, long-time socialist and labor union activist. He introduced the MCs for the morning program, August Nimtz, Professor of Political Science and African and African American Studies, University of Minnesota, co-coordinator of the Minnesota Cuba Committee and Erin Feely-Nahem, organiser with New York/New Jersey Cuba Si Coalition. The opening plenary was a



Alison Bodine representing Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade-Vancouver speaking at a workshop in the conference



Public Rally at the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Center

speech and dynamic discussion with Sandra Ramirez Rodriguez, Director of the North America Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). The second plenary session discussed “Challenges to Implementing

with questions and discussion.

The afternoon featured 20 workshops on many engaging themes, such as: “How the United States Occupied Guantanamo Bay and the Fight to Close It”, “Cuba’s Food and Energy Revolutions”, “Cuba and

moving event touching on many social justice themes from Cuba solidarity, to Venezuelan sovereignty, to Puerto Rican independence and political prisoners, to Black Lives Matter and the history of Cuban and American revolutionary

Speaking about taking action on the 17th of each month, Sandra Ramirez Rodriguez, Director of the North America Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) said: “At ICAP we are organizing actions every 17th of each month actions against the blockade. [...] We call on you to participate in the Tuitazos (Twitter campaign) and just to post your ideas, your actions, whatever you are doing in your cities. [...] For example in Miami, I would like to acknowledge, that every two months they organize a caravan of cars, so they make a great noise in the main streets of Miami demanding the end of the blockade. [...] but you can decide what other things you can do in your cities.”

the Full Economic, Commercial, and Cultural Dimensions of Normalization.” It featured talks and discussion with: Dr. Rosemari Mealy, board member of IFCO/Pastors for Peace and the author of “Fidel & Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting”; Ras Baraka, the Mayor of Newark, New Jersey; and Marietta Ulacia, Executive Director of the AfroLatin Jazz Alliance. Both of these plenaries were an energetic way to start the day with dozens of people actively participating

African Independence and Liberation”, “Democracy in Cuba”, “Cuban Medical Internationalism”, “Cuba’s Economy: Myth, Reality, and the New Economic Policies” and many others. Many in attendance at the conference found it difficult to choose between such a diverse and interesting array of workshops.

Saturday evening was a lively public rally and cultural event at the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Center. This was a

heroes from Che Guevara, to Malcolm X, to Comandante Fidel Castro. The evening featured many exceptional speakers who shared their messages from the heart. The evening also featured food, drinks, live music, a live painter, and dancing.

Sunday morning everyone came back to Fordham University to discuss an action plan for building Cuba solidarity in the United States and internationally. Conference attendees were welcomed by co-MCs Gail Walker, Director of IFCO/Pastors for Peace and Isaac Saney, Co-chair of the Canadian Network on Cuba. Before discussion, conference goers were treated to a video message from Gerardo Hernandez, one of the 5 Cuban heroes imprisoned in U.S. jails for over 16 years, reminding everyone of the important victory when he and the other Cuban heroes were released on December 17, 2014 and how our continuing campaigns for Cuba will be successful. The final addresses, by: Sandra Rodriguez Ramirez, Director of the North America Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP); Miguel Barnet Lanza, Cuban novelist, poet, and president of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists; and Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Cuba’s Ambassador to the United Nations were



Conference participants enjoying the cultural program of the conference

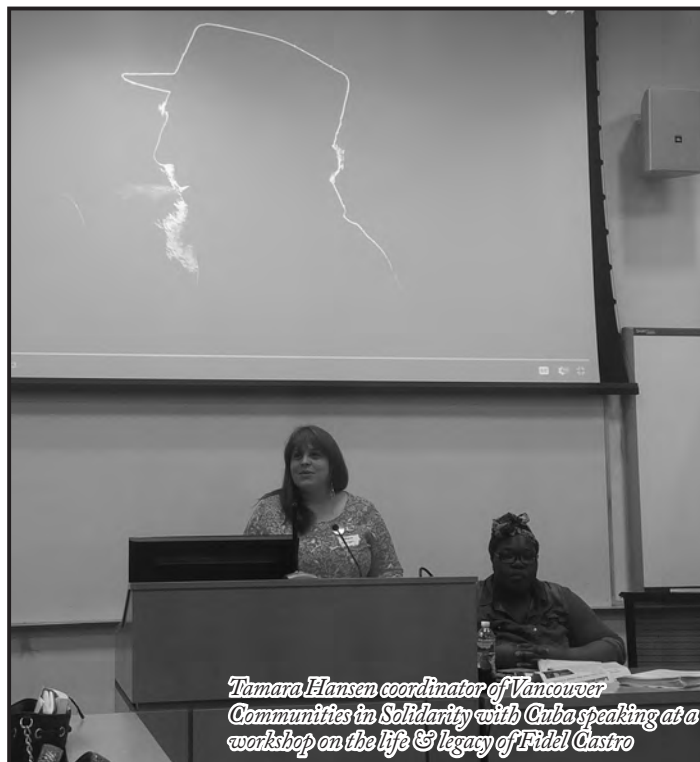
received with great applause and standing ovations from conference goers.

Highlighting Vancouver's Participation

Over 200 organizations and individuals from across the United States and around the world endorsed and supported the "National Conference to Fight for the Full Normalization of Relations between the U.S. and Cuba". Of these groups, many participated in the ad-hoc US-Cuba Normalization Committee organizing calls leading up to the conference, including Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver).

This was an important opportunity to connect with others from across the U.S. and around the world about how to strengthen and improve our international campaign against the U.S. blockade on Cuba, to demand the U.S. leave Guantanamo and to bring an end to U.S. regime change programs in Cuba. Both VCSC and FCAB-Vancouver sent representatives to the conference, who were invited to help organize and speak in two of the workshops, and passed

Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and author of "5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" spoke in the workshop on "The Revolutionary Legacy of Fidel Castro." This workshop addressed the importance of Comandante Fidel Castro's leadership in the Cuban revolutionary process, plus



Cuba's Ambassador to the United Nations, Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, explained in her closing remarks: "In today's world, where so much injustice prevails, where racist and xenophobic attitudes have re-emerged with unusual strength, where inequalities are exacerbated, where an unjust economic order is fostered and where the intention is to impose on the peoples the philosophy of war, your work will not only benefit Cuba; it will transcend our borders and will be part of the struggle for that better world that we believe possible."

an action proposal during the closing plenary on Sunday.

Alison Bodine, an executive member of FCAB-Vancouver spoke during the workshop titled, "National Legislative Action to End the Embargo, Opportunities for Local Campaigns to Play a Major Role, and Lessons from Canada". Overall, this workshop outlined the challenges the blockade creates for people living in Cuba, as well as for People in the U.S. wishing to engage with Cuba through either trade, cultural exchanges or sharing of educational and scientific knowledge. There was a discussion on the recent work with various municipal governments throughout the U.S., along with grassroots work happening in Vancouver, Canada. Peter Miller, from the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) and July26.org in Boston, organized this workshop to learn from the ongoing victories in the campaign to end the blockade on Cuba. The workshop also included insightful contributions from Tim Craine, the Greater Hartford Cuba Coalition; Andrea Fernandez Aponte, Latin America Working Group; and Pepe Rossy, Albany-Cuba Solidarity.

his contribution to Cuba's ongoing revolutionary internationalist legacy. Ike Nahem, one of the main organizers of the conference, as well as an organizer with Cuba Solidarity New York, hosted the workshop and spoke passionately about Fidel. Two other powerful speakers: Viola Plummer, chairperson of the December 12 Movement and Sasha Murphy, of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, also explained their sentiments about Fidel's role in history and ongoing developments in Cuba.

On Sunday at the closing plenary, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) put forward a resolution calling on the "National Conference to Fight for the Full Normalization of Relations between the U.S. & Cuba" to encourage groups and individuals to take action on the 17th of each month as a part of the International Campaign to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba, towards the full normalization (or normalization) of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. Added to this resolution were that these actions also include demands for the U.S. out of Guantanamo and an end to U.S. regime change programs against Cuba. The resolution passed with groups and individuals committing to take on a more active role in mobilizing their forces on the 17th of each month for Cuba!

Commitment to take action towards the normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations

During the final day of the conference other action plans and resolutions passed, to encourage everyone to integrate the lessons learned during the conference in the work they are doing in their communities. Most of the joint sessions of the conference are available on YouTube and we encourage those who would like to see the videos to visit Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba's website where we have posted a report and the video links. The official notes/resolutions passed have not yet been released, however when they are, we will post them on the VCSC website as well: www.vancubasolidarity.com

Lift the Blockade on Cuba NOW!

U.S. Out of Guantanamo!

US Government Stop the Campaign of 'Regime Change' in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba's Sovereignty and Self-determination!



We Learned from Fidel That A Socialist Revolution, To Be True, Must Maintain Firmness in Principles

Remarks by Ambassador Mrs. Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, at the closing session of the National Solidarity Conference for the Full Normalization of Cuba - United States Relations, in New York, March 2017.

Dear friends,

We are touched to see, once again, that we have so many good friends here. The work you have done over these years has been particularly important and helpful. You know very well what these expressions of solidarity mean for a country like Cuba, a small, blocked and rebel Island, that continues and will continue to withstand.

The strong support we have always received from the worthy sons of this country, who are increasingly demanding the unconditional lifting of the blockade and the normal relations between the two nations, have been fundamental.

We have followed with close attention the discussions in the panels and workshops held at the Conference.

Highly sensitive issues have been addressed, such as Cuba's role in the liberation of Africa; democracy in Cuba; the racial theme; and the empowerment of women; as well as problems directly linked to the current state of relations between Cuba and the United States, like the return of the territory illegally occupied in Guantánamo and the fight against the blockade, among other aspects.

A special mention deserves, for what it means to all of us, the space dedicated to remembering the legacy of our Commander-in-Chief and Historical

Leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro.

So many things could be said about Fidel that would be impossible to summarize in a few words. Fidel stood out for his solid political thinking and his condition of a leading Statesman; his virtue to always maintaining a constant and direct connection with his people; he is one of the greatest exponents of our time of the ideas taken up by the Liberators of America.

Fidel was and remains today the voice of rebelliousness, resistance and the hope of the peoples around the world for a better future. He taught us and continues to teach us that the struggle for social justice has no borders. Fidel turned solidarity with other peoples of the world into an essential quality of the Cuban Revolution.

Likewise, Fidel was and is the most accomplished expression of perseverance, of the conviction not to accept defeat in

any way and to maintain an unshakable faith in victory. This condition has become an attribute of all our people and has marked what has been and what is today the Cuban Revolution, which has firmly resisted for almost 60 years of aggression and fierce blockade.

Fidel is still and will always be alive in each one of us, because it is impossible to speak about him in past tense.

Dear friends,

The large number of topics addressed, and the depth of the discussions in this Conference are a clear expression of the interest of the participants in embracing the widest possible elements that characterize today's Cuban society, in which the common ground has been and still are the huge efforts made by the Revolution to reach growing levels of social justice for all.

As you know well, -and you know better



Ambassador Mrs. Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations speaking during the Cuba Conference in New York.

than anyone because you live and work here-, those efforts of the Revolution are made under very difficult conditions as a result of the policy of blockade, that this is the major obstacle to Cuban development.

So the battle is not over, and that's why we consider it vital that in the Conference several panels had been devoted to reviewing the work of the Solidarity Movement with Cuba, analyzing its perspectives and setting goals for future actions.

Sometimes, we have talked with some people who believe, in good faith and perhaps because they do not have all the information, that the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States meant the end of all problems. You know very well it is not so.

Some progress has been made in bilateral relations, mainly in diplomatic affairs, dialogue and cooperation on various issues of common interest. However, these steps, together with the executive measures adopted by the previous US Government, although they are in the right way, are still insufficient.

But the reality is that the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba remains in force, including its extraterritorial scope, and continues to

cause enormous damage and deprivation to our people and our economy.

The reality is that the return of the territory illegally occupied by the United States Naval Base in Guantanamo is still pending, against the will of Cuban people.

Therefore, Cuba will continue to present to the United Nations General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial Embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

That is why the Cuban people will continue to demand respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

And in that battle, your solidarity and mobilization are needed now more than ever.

In today's world, where so much injustice prevails, where racist and xenophobic attitudes have re-emerged with unusual strength, where inequalities are exacerbated, where an unjust economic order is fostered and where the intention is to impose on the peoples the philosophy of war, your work will not only benefit Cuba; it will transcend our borders and will be part of the struggle for that better world that we believe possible.

Dear friends,

I leave this conference convinced that the most important outcome of the discussions over these two days has been that we have worked together in the pursuit of the same objective. Our past and present history has taught us that only unity paves the way towards victory.

We can and we must move forward together to achieve this great goal that we have set ourselves, even if there is diversity of views, because diversity enriches and helps when, as in this case, we share common goals.

There is still a long way to go. You can be absolutely certain that Cuba will continue to work towards normal relations with the United States, on the basis of equality, reciprocity and respect for the sovereignty of our country.

Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz said in the most recent Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held last January in the Dominican Republic, and I quote:

"Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist in a civilized way, respecting differences and promoting all that benefits both countries and peoples, but it must not be expected that Cuba make concessions inherent to its sovereignty and independence."

This statement leads us to evoke once again our Commander-in-Chief Fidel, because we learned from him that a socialist Revolution, to be true, must maintain firmness in principles. And, as we have expressed in another gathering with our brothers from Harlem, there should be no doubt that we will continue to defend these principles today and in the future, whatever the scenario might be. And we are deeply convinced that in this battle, which is not over, we will continue to count on your firm support.

¡Viva Cuba libre!

Patria o Muerte
¡Venceremos!



Organisers with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, Cuba solidarity activists from New York and Cuban Ambassador to the UN Mrs. Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo



March 24, 2017

On Monday, March 20 Organization of the American States (OAS) General-Secretary Luis Almagro renewed his witch hunt against the democratically elected government of Venezuela. In another incredible display of blatant bias and opportunism he was joined by key members of Venezuela's right-wing opposition to call for Venezuela's suspension from the regional group. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice joins hundreds of social movements, intellectuals and governments in denouncing this reactionary and obvious provocation.

This is not the first time Almagro has tried to intervene in the domestic affairs of Venezuela. In June of 2016 he tried to invoke the "democratic charter" against Venezuela to suspend its membership in the OAS, while also publicly supporting a re-call of democratically elected Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. Unfortunately for him, both of his manoeuvrings inside and outside of Venezuela completely failed.

With its headquarters and much of its funding coming from Washington, DC the OAS has a long and shameful history of being used as a tool for US intervention in Latin America. Cuba was famously suspended in 1962 after overthrowing the US backed dictator Fulgencio Batista and refusing to bow to US domination. Realizing their Cuba policy was isolating them in Latin-America, in 2009 the US agreed that

Cuba re-join the OAS. Cuba refused stating that the organization still had the same dynamic of US control. With General-Secretaries like Almagro, who could blame Cuba!

Almagro's offensive and hostile move against Venezuela coincides with a continued push by the US government to overthrow the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. As one of the final acts of his presidency, Barack Obama renewed the executive order declaring Venezuela "an extraordinary threat" to US national security. This outrageous action enables the US Congress to continue their sanctions against Venezuela and opens the door to the possibility of military intervention.

The new President of the US, Donald Trump, and his new Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have already publicly called for the interference of other Latin American countries in Venezuela's domestic affairs. The US also continues to give millions of dollars to violent right-wing opposition groups in Venezuela to destabilize and to force the government of Venezuela to comply with US interests in Latin America.

We thoroughly condemn the Canadian government's ongoing participation in this campaign. This includes most recently joining 13 other OAS member countries in issuing a statement threatening to suspend Venezuela from the OAS over unproven and inflated allegations. These countries are a clear minority

of the 34 member organizations, and much less than the two thirds vote which would be required to suspend Venezuela. They know this, which is why they are resorting to meaningless media stunts. The US, Canada and their allies continue to try and hurl mud at Venezuela in the vain hope that some of it might one day stick. We demand Canada immediately withdraw from the 13 OAS country statement against Venezuelan government.

These efforts have so far all failed. Throughout the entire history of the Bolivarian Revolution, and especially when faced with U.S aggression, the Venezuelan people have stood up to defend their dignity, sovereignty and self-determination. They have also been able to count on the solidarity and support of millions of people around the world who see Venezuela as a leading example in the fight to build a better world. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice reaffirms our solidarity and commitment to the Bolivarian Revolution and denounces Luis Almagro, and all of his dirty tricks. We condemn all attempts of foreign intervention against the people of Venezuela.

► **LUIS ALMAGRO MUST GO!**

► **U.S. & CANADA RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!**

► **LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!**

WOMEN'S LIBERATION & BUILDING THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

Mobilization Against War and Occupation Celebrates International Women's Day!

By Janine Solanki

"When the men kill, it is up to us women to fight for the preservation of life." - Clara Zetkin

International Women's Day (IWD) was first proposed by the revolutionary Clara Zetkin, at the second International Conference of Working Women in 1910 in Copenhagen. International Women's Day was deeply rooted in the fight against war from the start, and Clara Zetkin's words above were spoken as the women's movement was taking up the struggle against World War I.

Today we are facing a new era of war and occupation, which has brought destruction to country after country, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Libya, Syria and Yemen. In these wars and occupations, women are the most impacted as they face physical and sexual violence, and struggle to protect and provide for the families that they are the center of. While the women's movement has many struggles, including for equality and against violence and sexual abuse, under war and occupation these important struggles take a back seat to just trying to keep families alive. However it is also under these circumstances that women are known to take up the lead in movements against war, oppression and injustice.

On March 10th, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) held an IWD celebration, "Women's Liberation and Building the Antiwar Movement" in Vancouver. The hall was full with men and women of all ages and backgrounds, coming together to celebrate and support equality and justice for women. The evening began with a powerful welcoming song and drumming from Kelly White, a Coast Salish Indigenous elder and activist. The MCs of the evening, Alison Bodine (MAWO chair) and Janine Solanki (MAWO executive committee member) opened the event speaking on the situation of war and occupation around the world, and the importance of women taking a leading role in the antiwar movement. The event continued with video clips showing women around the world in the struggle for a better world, from Venezuelan women organizing their communities to a female Palestinian hip hop artist speaking against occupation and for women's empowerment. The audience then heard from Nabilah, a Yemeni community member, who gave a heartfelt speech on her experiences as a Yemeni



women and about the Saudi-led, US-backed war against her country.

The audience was then brought to their feet by the music of Jabulile Dladla, a former singer with the Soweto Gospel Choir. The room could not help but get up and dance to the South African rhythms and Jabulile's incredible voice! The audience was then treated to the brilliant voice of another talented woman, Kiki Connelly. Kiki, along with Brian Broda on the guitar, encouraged the audience to sing along and led the crowd in beautiful and soul-touching songs. The evening also featured poetry in three different languages. Mayra Climaco, a Nicaraguan poet, former Sandinista militant and long-time social justice activist read some of her own poetry in Spanish, translated also in English. Azza Rojbi, a MAWO secretary and Tunisian social justice activist, read poetry from North Africa in both Arabic and English. Tamara Hansen, coordinator with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) spoke about the strong role, historically and today, of women in the Cuban Revolution. She also shared a special video message from Tania Lopez Larroque, the Cuban Consul General in Toronto, who extended greetings and solidarity with the event.

The evening came to a close with more music and dancing, and a feeling of inspiration from having heard the music, poetry and stories of so many strong, amazing women! International Women's Day is one important day to celebrate, and a day to propel us forward to continue fighting for women's liberation and against war and occupation every day!

OUR HERITAGE



Rosa Luxemburg
Revolutionary Marxist Leader
1871-1919

"In Germany, the only truly democratic institution – universal suffrage – is not a conquest won by bourgeois liberalism. Universal suffrage in Germany was an instrument for the fusion of the small States. It is only in this sense that it has any importance for the development of the German bourgeoisie, which is otherwise quite satisfied with semi-feudal constitutional monarchy. In Russia, capitalism prospered for a long time under the regime of oriental absolutism, without having the bourgeoisie manifest the least desire in the world to introduce democracy. In Austria, universal suffrage was above all a safety line thrown to a foundering and decomposing monarchy. In Belgium, the conquest of universal suffrage by the labour movement was undoubtedly due to the weakness of the local militarism, and consequently to the special geographic and political situation of the country. But we have here a "bit of democracy" that has been won not by the bourgeoisie but against it.

The uninterrupted victory of democracy, which to our revisionism as well as to bourgeois liberalism, appears as a great fundamental law of human history and, especially, modern history is shown upon closer examination to be a phantom. No absolute and general relation can be constructed between capitalist development and democracy. The political form of a given country is always the result of the composite of all the existing political factors, domestic as well as foreign. It admits within its limits all variations of the scale from absolute monarchy to the democratic republic.

We must abandon, therefore, all hope of establishing democracy as a general law of historical development even within the framework of modern society."

Congratulations Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González!



Fire This Time congratulates Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González for his new position as President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). We give our full support and solidarity to Fernando as he takes on new leadership in building international solidarity with Cuba and the Cuban Revolution!

50 YEARS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA
7th INTERNATIONAL CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE
 OCT. 27-29, 2017
 Vancouver, Canada

100 YEARS SINCE THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION & 58 YEARS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION CUBAN REVOLUTION
 THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP & IMPLEMENTING THE SOCIALIST PROJECT & WHERE WE ARE TODAY

FEATURING
FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ
 ONE OF THE 5 CUBAN HEROES UNJUSTLY HELD IN U.S. PRISON FOR MORE THAN 16 YEARS

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US-CUBA CARAVAN 2017

Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now! Cuba Supporters in Vancouver Protest Blockade on the Streets and Online

By Janine Solanki

For over 66 years, the country of Cuba has been subjected to a cruel and inhuman blockade by the United States. This doesn't simply mean Cuba can't trade with the US, although not having the ability to import from or export to Cuba's biggest and closest potential trading partner is hugely significant. The blockade means that US subsidiaries, US patented goods or anything made with a US part anywhere around the world cannot be traded with Cuba, as well as non-US companies have been told they must to choose between trading with the huge market of the US, or the small island of Cuba. Any ship that docks in a Cuban port is banned from docking in a US port for 6 months after, making trade very expensive. This is not only an embargo, but a blockade. Also, to prevent US citizens from seeing Cuba for themselves, travel to Cuba has been and continues to be restricted.

However on December 17, 2014 former US President Barack Obama announced that the US would be working towards normalizing relations with Cuba. Many would think that this means all of these above points on the US blockade are now in the past. While there have been some limited exceptions made for travel and trade and diplomatic relations have been reestablished, the US trade and travel blockade is still in place and still trying to economically strangle Cuba.

For Cuba and Cuba supporters world-wide, Obama's historic 2014 announcement didn't herald in the end of the US blockade on Cuba, but signaled an opportunity towards ending the blockade. With Trump in power, now more than ever it is vital that public pressure push for an end to the US blockade, in its entirety for

once and all. Not long after Obama's promise towards normalization was made, Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver was formed, and has been protesting every 17th of the month since to demand an end to the blockade.

On March 17, 2017 Cuba supporters gathered together for the monthly picket action in front of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver. Activists raised picket signs and voices demanding "Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now!" and "Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!" Between energetic rounds of picketing under typical Vancouver rain, participants heard from local speakers as well as from Cuba solidarity

activists across the country in Ottawa, via phone. Alongside Vancouver, Ottawa Cuba Connections also holds a picket action in front of the US Embassy every month.

March 17th was also a "Tuitazo", an international twitter campaign called by

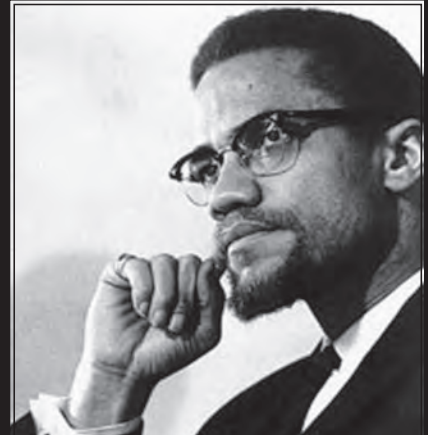
the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity. Cuba supporters around the world tweeted #NoMasBloqueo against the US blockade, and Vancouver protesters took photos and tweeted to add to the world-wide twitter storm.

Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver will continue organizing protests and events, no matter who is in the White House, until the blockade is lifted. Join the next protest on April 17th, 4pm in front of the US Consulate in Vancouver to demand:

End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!
US Government Stop the Campaign of "Regime Change" in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba's Sovereignty and Self-Determination!



"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from Malcolm X Speech
Racist in Reverse? - Feb. 14, 1965 –
Ford Auditorium

"Brothers and sisters, if you and I would just realize, that once we learn to talk the language that they understand, they will then get the point. You can't ever reach a man if you don't speak his language. If a man speaks the language of brute force, you can't come to him with peace. Why goodnight! He'll break you in two, as he has been doing all along. If a man speaks French, you can't speak to him in German. If he speaks Swahili, you can't communicate with him in Chinese. You have to find out, what does this man speak? Once you know his language, learn how to speak his language. He'll get the point, there will be some dialogue, some communication, and some understanding will be developed. You've been in this country long enough to know the language the Klan speaks, they only know one language. What you and I have to start doing in 1965, I mean that's what you have to do because most of us have already been doing it, is start learning a new language. Learn the language that they understand, and then when they come up on our door step to talk, we can talk."

".... It is a duty, it is your and my duty, as men, as human beings, it's our duty to our people, to organize ourselves. Let the government know if they don't stop that Klan, we'll stop it ourselves. Then you'll see the government start doing something about it. But don't ever think they are going to do it on some morality basis, no. So I don't believe in violence, that's why I want to stop it."

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HANDS OFF YEMEN!

WHY YEMEN IS UNDER ATTACK

FRIDAY APRIL 7
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FREE PUBLIC FORUM + MULTIMEDIA
FEATURING SPEAKERS FROM MAWO &
THE YEMENI COMMUNITY

PROTEST AGAINST SAUDI-U.S. LED BOMBING OF YEMEN
MARCH 26, 2017 - SANA'A, YEMEN



MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION (MAWO)
WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG



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Joe's Cafe (1150 Commercial Dr.)

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